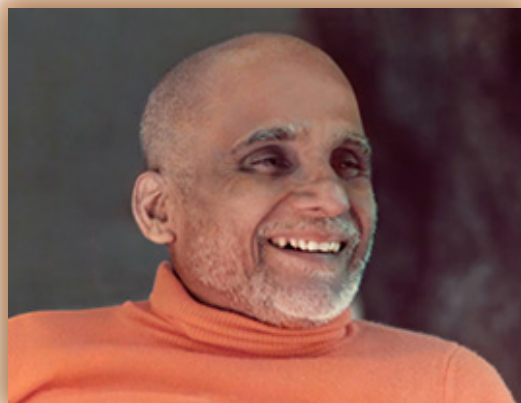
COMMENTARY ON THE KATHA UPANISHAD

SWAMI KRISHNANANDA
The Divine Life Society
Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh, India
Website: www.swami-krishnananda.org

ABOUT THIS EDITION

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SHANTI MANTRA

Every Upanishad commences with a prayer, the Shanti Mantra; a formula for the invocation of peace, chanted at the beginning and close of study. The Shanti Mantra of the Katha Upanishad reads:

auṁ sa ha nāv avatu, saha nau bhunaktu, saha vīryam karavāvahai; tejasvi nāv adhītam astu: mā vidviṣāvahai; auṁ śāntih, śāntih, śāntih.

It means that there should be proper attunement of spirit between the Guru and disciple before they begin the study, for only then will the teaching be fruitful: "May we both be protected. May both of us be taken care of properly. May we study together. May our teaching and learning be resplendent. May there be no misunderstanding between us. May there be no discord of any kind. May there be peace, may there be peace, may there be peace." Thrice peace; we have three kinds of troubles, called *tapatraya*: internally, physical ones; externally, from outside beings; and from above, given by the gods. May all these cease.

INTRODUCTION

The Bhagavadgita is a part of the Mahabharata epic. The purpose of this epic is to spread esoteric knowledge to the public—a knowledge which is difficult to get. The Mahabharata is a Smriti, which implies an easy rendering of a complex and esoteric text. Smriti is a text which is written, and not revealed, like the Shruti is. The Vedas are a revealed text and not written by any author.

As mentioned in one of the Gita Mahatmya verses, the Bhagavadgita is the essence of the Upanishads. Why was it necessary to give the essence? Because Kaliyuga was about to dawn, and truths which could be understood before now needed elaborate explanations, as people's minds had become unfit to understand the subtleties of the ShrutisHence, it is profitable to behold the esoteric and mystical meaning of the Bhagavadgita. A truth not to be given to the masses, but only to initiated disciples. It is not that knowledge is to be hidden, but it should be avoided being given into wrong hands.

There is a scripture similar to the Bhagavadgita in many respects, called the Katha Upanishad, the one from which the Bhagavadgita-teachings are believed by many to have been drawn. If the Bhagavadgita is a conversation between Sri Krishna and Arjuna, placed in the context of the historical event of the Mahabharata war, the Katha Upanishad is a conversation between Yama and Nachiketas. Just as we have the confusion of Arjuna's mind in the beginning of the Bhagavadgita, we find intense aspiration on the part of Nachiketas in the beginning of the Kathopanishad. There are four important stages in its

teaching, even as the eighteen chapters of the Bhagavadgita reveal the stages of the *sadhaka's* evolution.

The Katha is magnificent in its poetic beauty and mystical value. It touches the vital points of spirituality without beating about the bush. The verses or mantras are statements of human consciousness in its higher reaches of the spirit. This Upanishad takes an anecdote for its background. It occurs in the Taittiriya Brahmana portion of the Vedas which precedes the Kathopanishad:

Vajasravasa Gautama performed a sacrifice called Sarvavedas or Sarvadakshina, a sacrifice in which one is supposed to offer everything he has, without exception; hence its name Sarvadakshina. It is a preparation for the last stage of spiritual life. However, he was not really ready for it. He wanted to offer only things which were not useful, thus following the letter of law, but losing the spirit behind it. He had a young son, Nachiketas by name, who clearly saw the two defects in the sacrifice: the giving of weak and barren cows, and the father's ignorance of the fact that the son, too, was to be offered. "Joyless," said the boy, "are the regions to which he goes who offers such sacrifices!" thus irritating his father. And he asked him: "To whom are you going to offer me?" He repeated this question thrice, and the displeased Gautama answered angrily: "To death I send you!"

Here ends the outline of the story, and now we have the real beginning of the Upanishad—a direct teaching to the spiritual aspirant.

The Vedas contain four sections: the mantra portion called the Samhitas; the ritualistic portion called the Brahmanas (external sacrifice to the chanting of the

Samhitas); the internal ways of sacrifice, the Aranyakas—which can also be called internal Brahmanas—which are sacrifices without involving materials; and the endportion of the Vedas, the Upanishads, also known as Vedanta.

CHAPTER 1

SECTION 1 – NACHIKETAS' POSITION

Prologue: Nachiketas Devoted to Death

uśan ha vai vājaśravasaḥ sarva-vedasaṁ dadau:
tasya ha naciketā nāma putra āsa. (1)

"Desiring heavenly enjoyment, Gautama performed a sacrifice called *sarva dakshina*. He had a son, Nachiketas, very thoughtful and discriminative."

Desiring did he perform the sacrifice. The intention behind it was to gain heavenly pleasure. This represents the purely exoteric aspect of religion, the outward form of devotion and faith as different from the internal spirit or the esoteric significance of practice. While Gautama represents the outer form of religion, Nachiketas symbolises the inner spirit. The former attitude expects something from every religious act: 'What shall I get from my pilgrimage, from a sacred bath, etc.?' These are the questions of this mind. 'If I will not get something, I will not be religious'. This attitude exhibits a commercial attitude leading to bigotry. While the outer form is necessary—like the legs of a person who can walk with them but needs a head to think with—it is inadequate by itself. The spirit should go hand in hand with the form. So, religion is different from spirituality, though it is very necessary. The outer form of worship should be an expression of inner surrender, and not a mere symbol. This is what Gautama's sacrifice lacked. Desiring something he performed the sacrifice, but did not part with everything he

had, as was required by its spirit. When this *dakshina* was given by him, Nachiketas thought to himself:

taṁ ha kumāraṁ santaṁ dakṣiṇāsu nīyamānāsu śraddhā-viveśa, so'manyata. (2)

Is this religion? He was a great spiritual example for all times to come, though his question was impertinent. He thought: "What is this sacrifice?"

pītodakā jagdha-tṛṇā dugdhadohā nirindriyāḥ
anandā nāma te lokās tān sa gacchata tā dadat. (3)

He wants the pleasure of this world, so he did not part with the good cows; and he also wants the pleasure in the other world, so he gives (useless) cows. It is a poor sacrifice, because he offers that which is unworthy.

sa hovāca pitaram, tāta kasmai māṁ dāsyasīti;
dvitīyaṁ tṛtīyam; taṁ hovāca: mṛtyave tvā dadāmīti. (4)

In the fourth mantra, the teaching proper commences with: *sa hovaca pitaram...* "To whom do you propose to offer me?" The 'me' represents also the self of Gautama. If it is offering all, *sarvadakshina*, then it should include not only what belongs to one, but also his own self. Three times asked Nachiketas this question. The answer was, "Unto death I offer you." Though this was the answer to the son, it mystically means the death of the soul.

Three times asked the boy, implying the 'I' has to be given up in three stages, not at once. The first one is the physical offering, followed by the subtle and the causal, because we are this threefold being; we can also call it conscious, subconscious and unconscious. We are citizens of three worlds; this is brought out when one takes *sanyasa*. The seeker takes an oath that he renounces the pleasures of

this world, of the astral world and of the heavens—all the three worlds. The offering has to be total and all-inclusive. Psychologists call this condition introversion, and it is self-abnegation in ethics. So Nachiketas' thrice-repeated question has spiritual import of the necessary threefold offering of every seeker. This is like dying, for who can offer his whole being to God? We cannot even offer our physical possessions. To offer the mind and the subconscious is veritable death. The threefold personality has to pass through veritable death, and this is rebirth, as it were, into the awakening of the spirit. It is rebirth in the spirit, and death to all that is physical. "Let the 'me' be offered in its threefold significance!" is the outer and inner meaning of the mantra.

bahūnām emi prathamaḥ, bahūnām emi madhyamaḥ;
kiṁ svid yamasya kartavyam yan mayādya kariṣyati. (5)

It is the darkness of not-knowing that is spiritual death. Nachiketas thought: "What is the business of Yama that is being achieved through me? Why should I go to him? I have served my father well. I may be the first or at least the next, but not the worst. What is the intention of his offering me to Yama?"

anupaśya yathā pūrve pratipaśya tathāpare,
sasyam iva martyaḥ pacyate sasyam ivajāyate punaḥ. (6)

"Well, whatever you have said is all right," he said to Gautama, and added: "Don't withdraw your words. Remember our ancestors who have adhered to truth always. Let it be so, although it may be unpleasant. Though you might have unwittingly, in anger, said it, don't take it back. Like a corn in the field does a human being grow and fall:

the seed grows only to fall and falls only to grow. So is human life; and if I pass away, let there be no grief, because birth and death are only correlatives."

The Upanishad does not mention what happened to Nachiketas or Gautama after this conversation. The Taittiriya Brahmana says that the boy went to the hall of Yama, either due to the words of Gautama or by the power of his own *tapas*.

Nachiketas in the House of Death

vaiśvānaraḥ praviśaty atithir brāhmaṇo gṛhān:
tasyaitāṁ śāntiṁ kurvanti, hara vaivasvatodakam. (7)

When Nachiketas reached the abode of Yama, Lord Yama was not there. This is a very important stage in the seeker's life: when the disciple goes to the Guru, the latter often does not welcome him, but shows indifference.

Suka went to Janaka's court and was asked to wait. There was no warm reception; he was not told when the Guru would be available or even if he would be available at all— but instead, great temptations were presented to him.

Yama came after three days and, during that time, Nachiketas waited patiently. In contrast to Suka, we do not know what he was thinking or doing. Another important truth is taught here: that a guest should be honoured. A guest who comes of his own accord, an *atithi*—one who comes without a particular *tithi* or day—is regarded as God. It is the universal Soul that presents Itself as the guest. One who comes to you, expecting help, is to be regarded as God Himself; such a one is to be propitiated. Such a guest, if turned out, takes away all the merits of that person who is inhospitable.

āśā-pratīkṣe saṁgataṁ sūnṛtāṁ ceṣṭāpūrte putra-paśūṁś ca sarvān
etad vṛṅkte puruṣasyālpamedhaso yasyānaśnan vasati brāhmaṇo gṛhe. (8)

"Of the person in whose house a guest starves, is not being given, even when asked for; of that person, the guest goes away taking all virtues and merits, and also the lives of all his children and cows; all these are destroyed."

When God is turned out of a house, anything can happen, is what is suggested by this. There is a beautiful story in the Chhandogya Upanishad, of a poor man who went for alms. When people refused him, he asked: "Do you know to whom you are refusing to give? To the Universal Prana!" They were frightened to hear this, and called him back and offered alms. The spiritual man is a godly man; a saint is a divine person. And hence, the *atithi* who is coming either to bless you or to test you may go away, taking everything of yours, if you turn a deaf ear to him.

When Yama returned to his abode, his courtiers told him: "Lord, a guest has come; an uninvited guest. Who is more important than he! He is God who has come as the universal fire." Yama answered: "Please him. Let him not burn; give him water!"

When Yama presents himself before Nachiketas, the spirit of the Upanishad rises to great intensity.

Three Boons Offered to Nachiketas

tisro rātrīr yād avatsīr gṛhe me'naśnan brahman atitthir namasyaḥ.
namaste'ṣtu brahman; svasti me'stu tasmāt prati trīn varān vṛṇīṣva. (9)

Yama says to Nachiketas: "O Brahmana, you have fasted in my house for three nights. I make obeisance to you! Ask from me three boons, for the three nights you starved here, so that I may be blessed and do not incur the sin of not giving to my guest. May auspiciousness be mine!"

The soul that ascends to God has to break three knots—the knots of *avidya*, *kama* and *karma*, corresponding to the three bodies: *sthula*, *sukshma* and *karana*. *Karma* is the character of the physical body, *kama* of the subtle body, and *avidya* of the causal. These three are like impregnable fortresses; hard is it to penetrate them! They are called the *tripura* of the three demons of ignorance, desire and action. The only way of liberating oneself from them is fasting. They are veritable nights; they are darkness.

Three boons will be bestowed in accordance with these three fasts of the physical, subtle and causal realms. Eating is a great bondage which can do and undo things. When you take food of any particular realm or any person, you are bound and obliged to them. On all these levels of being, there are temptations of various kinds. The free person is he who does not get bound by them, by not accepting gifts. When you take something from someone, you must return it to him, which obligation brings you rebirth. If you have not taken anything, you need not come back. Thus, the three nights represent the breaking of the three knots of *avidya*, *kama* and *karma*. These fasts bring great advantages. The first is universal renown. Even if you starve for twenty-one days, your name appears in newspapers and you become a world-celebrity; this is only a gross form of starvation. But accepting nothing which does not really belong to, or is not really needed by you, is a great *tapas*.

The spiritual seeker often gets more than even householders. This is a temptation which prevents a soul from progressing. So, accept not anything in the physical, subtle and causal realms! But the higher you go, the deeper are the temptations. The physical ones are weaker than the higher ones which are more powerful and more difficult to overcome. Yama, as the universal night, offers three boons for the three nights of fasting observed by Nachiketas.

Nachiketas's First Wish: Return to an Appeased Father on Earth

śānta-saṁkalpaḥ sumanā yathā syād vīta-manyur gautamo mābhi mṛtyo,
tvat-prasṛṣṭam mābhivadet-pratīta, etat trayāṇām prathamaṁ varaṁ vṛṇe. (10)

"As the first gift, O Lord, offer this to me: when I return, released by you to the world of my father, may he receive me with a calm mind, free from anger, recognising me as I have been before; not thinking that I am dead and returning."

This implies that Nachiketas must return, and when returned, should be recognised. He wants normal circumstances to prevail when he returns. This is the result of fasting for one night: one becomes normal in a spiritual sense, and the world from which the soul rose accepts it truly. Many believe this verse to mean that by the power of fasting, austerity etc., a seeker can gain world-renown; you will wield a power which the world will recognise. This is a boon, but also a temptation of which one has to be cautious. A person, who was just a part of the world, now becomes a world figure. Every seeker will have to pass

through this stage, and to each one it will come in a different shape.

To give an example, there was a *mahatma* in the regions above Gangotri. For more than twenty years he did not even come to the village, such was his *vairagya*. But suddenly, desire arose in his mind to go and preach to the world. Of course, his retreat must have done some good, because no *tapas* goes without effect. Such a temptation also came to the Buddha. Mara said to him: “You have attained the highest! Go and preach to the world!” If one yields to this, he returns before reaching the topmost level, feeling a satisfaction that the world recognises him, and spiritual pride takes over. It is difficult to truly transcend this stage; and it is doubtful if there is anyone now who has done it. It would be a rise to universal renown and universal knowledge.

yathā purastād bhavitā pratīta auddālakir āruṇir matprasṛṣṭaḥ,
sukhaṁ rātrīś śayitā vītamanyus tvāṁ dadṛśivān mṛtyumukhāt pramuktam. (11)

Yama says: “Your first boon is granted, and you will be recognised by your father who will be happy to receive you, who has returned with knowledge. What is the second boon?”

Nachiketas’s Second Wish: Understanding of the Sacrifical Fire

svarge loke na bhayaṁ kiṁ ca nāsti na tatra tvaṁ na jarayā bibheti.
ubhe tīrtvā aśanāyā pipāse śokātigo modate svarga-loke. (12)

Nachiketas asks: “Lord, I have heard that in heaven there is supreme satisfaction, there is no death. People are youthful, with no fear of old age. How do they gain immortality? Teach me that secret!”

Gods in heaven experience only birth, youth and growth; no old age and death. There are two heavens, the lower and the higher. The lower one referred to in the Puranas is *indra-loka*, and the higher one is *brahma-loka.* Nachiketas may be referring to both of them. In the lower heaven is intense joy. It is like our world; a counterpart to our desires, but there is no heat, cold, hunger, thirst, old age, disease and death, all of which are our sufferings here. The individuals there are partaking of the glory of the realm. But from that heaven, one has to come back. One may go there on account of having done good deeds here, but on exhaustion of their merits, he returns. The higher heaven or *brahma-loka* is different in its nature: it is identical with *hiranyagarbha.* And here, one crosses over hunger and thirst.

When one becomes the Soul of the cosmos, or *hiranyagarbha*, there is no return. It is enjoyment not only after death, but even while living. This state is known as *jivanmukti*, and described in various ways in our scriptures. It is the state of *vaishvanara*, identified with *vaishvanara-agni* or *nachiketas-agni*, or universal fire. This *vaishvanara* is *ishvara*, the Universal Man (*vishva* and *nara*: *vaishvanara*) to be attained through a mysterious *upasana* by imagining, in internal meditation, the external sacrifice. The Aranyakas contain such types of meditation where the actual sacrifice is contemplated in the mind, without material objects. The *nachiketas-agni* is an example of this

type. This particular portion of the Upanishad is a faint memory of the Aranyaka portion of the Taittiriya Brahmana.

sa tvam agniṁ svargyam adhyeṣi mṛtyo, prabrūhi taṁ śraddadānāya mahyam
svarga-lokā amṛtatvam bhajanta, etad dvitīyena vṛṇe vareṇa. (13)

"O Yama, you know the secret of the performance of this mysterious universal fire- sacrifice, by which one can attain heaven. Teach this to me, who has come with faith. I am honest. I have heard that they become immortal, who reach that abode. This I choose as my second boon." From the external sacrifice of Gautama, we turn to the internal one of Nachiketas.

pra te bravīmi tad u me nibodha svargyam agniṁ naciketaḥ prajānan
anantalokāptim atho pratiṣṭhāṁ viddhi, tvam etaṁ nihitaṁ guhāyām. (14)

"Well, I shall tell you the secret," says Yama. "I do know it, and I know that you know that I know. This heavenly fire, which is not physical, is the support of the Viratpurusha, the universe; and it is in your heart, secretly."

What is this universal fire? Not found in the kitchen, not found in the house, but in the heart of everyone. Just as the ocean is in every drop, the Universal is in you, and can be invoked. The knowledge of this *agni* is equal to becoming the support of this universe, attaining to all worlds, nay, he himself is this creation. Wonderful is this teaching! It is not easy to explain what this universal fire is. The fifteenth mantra says it very enigmatically, and it is difficult to understand.

lokādim agniṃ tam uvāca tasmai, yā iṣṭakā, yāvatīr vā, yathā vā.
sa cāpi tat pratsvadat yathoktam; athāsya mṛtyuḥ punar evāha tuṣṭaḥ. (15)

The Upanishad does not reveal what Yama told Nachiketas, but uses a mystical language: *agni* is the origin of everything, and creation emanates from it.

"This sacrifice can be done either internally or externally, even as you can adore God by thinking of Him, or by offering flowers to Him. The nature of the substance with which to build this altar, the number of bricks and the way of lighting the fire—these three are the difficult things in the sacrifice. Whatever Yama spoke, Nachiketas repeated it just as it had been told."

tam abravīt prīyamāṇo mahātmā varaṁ tavehādya dadāmi bhūyaḥ.
tavaiva nāmnā bhavitāyam agniḥ, sṛṅkāṁ cemām aneka-rūpāṁ gṛhāṇa. (16)

"Yama was very pleased with his competence and said: 'My dear child, I give you here another boon: I ordain that from now on this sacrifice will be called by your name instead of *vaishvanara-agni*. Take also this multi-coloured garland' (symbolising *prakriti*)."

In mystical texts, the spiritual experience in this condition is compared to a garland of different colours that adorns the seeker, indicating manifold experiences and not only a single one. Here, one is blessed with universal knowledge of the past, present and future, and of memory of previous births. Past and future become an eternal present.

There are many stages of God-attainment, and three or four major ones. One of them is the acquisition of omniscience, or universal knowledge, or being *hiranyagarbha*, the Soul of the universe. This meditation which gives the practitioner supernatural knowledge—because the world which is normally seen as an external object enters into himself—is described elsewhere in this Upanishad. A Guru has to teach personally how this is done.

triṇāciketas tribhir etya sandhiṁ trikarma-kṛt tarati janma-mṛtyū
brahmajajñaṁ devam īḍyam viditvā nicāyye'māṁ śāntim atyantam eti. (17)

This is the crux of the teaching. The performance is threefold; the means employed are threefold; the action is threefold. It is only through the tradition of a Guru explaining this enigmatic mantra that we know its meaning. What is this threefold performance symbolised by the threefold fast? It is self-control in the three realms. In addition to physical fast, also fast mentally. And thirdly, you should not even have a subconscious desire, not even for renown or omniscience. This threefold internal meditation is *trinaciketas*: piercing through mind, intellect and soul. Another explanation says it means father, mother, Guru—threefold gathering of knowledge. Still another holds that by performing the three duties: *tapas*, *dana* and *yajna*—the three austerities relating to oneself, world and God—one transcends mind, intellect and individuality; *tapas* meaning the restraint of one's passions; *dana* the giving out of oneself to the world, thereby killing the ego; and *yajna* the sacrifice of one's individuality. "By these, one

crosses over birth and death. Then the flame burns steadily in the form of divine experience, born of Brahma or the Universal. Knowing Him, resplendent and adorable, one reaches peace ultimate.”

triṇāciketas trayam etad viditvā ya evaṁ vidvāṁś cinute nāciketam,
sa mṛtyu-pāśān purataḥ praṇodya śokātigo modate svarga-loke. (18)

“Nachiketas, I have told you the secret of internal meditation, hereafter to be called *nachiketas-agni*. Performing it, he who lights thrice this fire breaks the bonds of birth and death (which are but *raga* and *dvesha)*. Breaking them, one becomes a *jivanmukta* in this very birth. Freed from all sorrow, he reaches the highest heaven of divine bliss.”

eṣa te’gnir naciketas svargyo yam avṛṇīthāḥ dvitīyena vareṇa.
etam agnim tavaiva pravakṣyanti janāsas; tṛtīyaṁ varaṁ naciketo vṛṇīṣva. (19)

As a result of two days’ fasting, Nachiketas received the blessing of two great boons. Now, Yama speaks to him about the third one: “Nachiketas, your second boon has also been granted; the fire sacrifice will be known by your name. Choose now your third boon.”

Nachiketas’s Third Wish: Knowledge Concerning the Final Death

yeyam prete vicikitsā manuṣye’stītyeke nāyam astīti caike;
etat vidyām anuśiṣṭas tvayāham, varāṇām eṣa varas tṛtīyaḥ. (20)

The boy now surprises Yama by raising a most unusual and unexpected point, a question that most people would

not even think about: "I ask of you not any material object, but a knowledge which I wish to receive. What happens to the soul when it reaches its final death—extinction of personality. Some hold that nothing exists; that all is void. Some say, something is. I shall regard your blessing me with this knowledge as my third boon." This is not the death people normally undergo but the other one, when the soul crosses all phenomena. Does it exist there, or does it get extinguished?

This question was also put to the Buddha. He replied that to say something exists or nothing exists is both wrong. Maitreyi asked Yajnavalkya about this same theme, to which he answered that after final death, there is no self-consciousness.

devair atrāpi vicikitsitam purā, na hi suvijñeyam, aṇur eṣa dharmaḥ.
anyaṁ varaṁ naciketo vṛṇīṣva, mā moparotsīr ati mā sṛjainam. (21)

"Even the gods wonder about this, and have never come to an understanding. Subtle is this truth, so subtle that no answer would be adequate to it. So, Nachiketas, please ask another question. Please release me from this obligation," said Lord Yama. But Nachiketas was not a person to give up like that.

devair atrāpi vicikitsitaṁ kila, tvaṁ ca mṛtyo yan na suvijñeyam āttha,
vaktā cāsya tvādṛg-anyo na labhyaḥ; nānyo varastulya etasya kaścit. (22)

"You say that even the gods have doubt; that it is the subtlest of truths—from this I can derive that you know it. I am happy to be in the presence of the proper person! No

boon can be equal to this: I do not want an inferior one!" With this statement, Yama is cornered.

śatāyuṣaḥ putra-pautrān vṛṇīṣva bahūn paśūn hasti-hiraṇyam aśvān
bhūmer mahad-āyatanaṁ vṛṇīṣva svayaṁ ca jīva śarado yāvad icchasi. (23)

"I offer you big posterity, wealth, cattle, gold and elephants in plenty; land and long life for yourself."

etat tulyam yadi manyase, varaṁ vṛṇīṣva, vittaṁ cira-jīvikāṁ ca,
mahā-bhūmau naciketas tvam edhi, kāmānāṁ tvā kāmabhājaṁ karomi. (24)

"Any boon like this that you want, choose it, and wealth and long life. Prosper, O Nachiketas, on this vast earth!"

ye ye kāmā durlabhā martya-loke sarvān kāmāṁś chandataḥ prārthayasva.
imā rāmāḥ, sarathāḥ satūryāḥ, na hīdṛśā lambhanīyā manuṣyaiḥ.
ābhir mat-prattābhiḥ paricārayasva, naciketo maraṇam mānuprākṣīḥ. (25)

"Whatever delights there may be, conceivable or inconceivable, visible or invisible, ask for them without restraint. Here are chariots, and noble maidens with musical instruments, to serve you. People have never even seen them; they cannot be won by men. Be happy with these. But do not ask about this great death again, I pray!"

śvo-bhāvā martyasya yad antakaitat sarvendriyāṇām jarayanti tejaḥ
api sarvaṁ jīvitam alpam eva tavaiva vāhās tava nṛtya-gīte. (26)

Nachiketas says: "I understand your intention. But ephemeral are all these pleasures! They wear out our senses; we become feeble and old after their enjoyment. Even longest life is nothing before eternity; and all the happiness—because it has a beginning—shall have an end also. These chariots, these damsels and enjoyments: take them back; I do not want them!"

na vittena tarpaṇīyo manuśyaḥ, lapsyāmahe vittam adrākṣma cet tvā.
jīviṣyāmo yāvad īśiṣyasi tvaṁ varastu me varaṇīyaḥ sa eva. (27)

"No man can find eternal contentment with these, and yet you want me to be satisfied with them." This is what Yayati declared after a hundred years of enjoyment: "Wants have no limit; when one is satisfied, another one comes up, and then a third one, and so on." Thus, no wealth of the world can keep anybody content. "And if I wanted this wealth: if I know the secret about death from you, it shall come as a corollary. So why should I only want the effect without the cause, the former being transient and fleeting, since we shall only exist as long as the world, for when it gets dissolved, we too, shall have to go. I do not want all these things."

These are temptations in the path of *sadhana*, to which Nachiketas gave a prompt and befitting reply. All objects Yama offered come under the *eshanas*. There are three of them: *vitteshana*, *putreshana* and *lokeshana*, also called *kanchana*, *kamini*, and *kirti*; the desire for gold, the desire for sex and the desire for fame; these three bind the soul and prevent its further progress. Yama offered everything except God, with the intention to trick Nachiketas; but his

ruse is met with equal strength of *viveka* and *vairagya*: the power of renunciation backed up by understanding.

Whatever be its glamour, everything is transient. Even glamour is relative to this world, and when the latter changes, the former also changes, and we are in horror instead of delight. Even if we are to really get these things, they are not going to satisfy us. No one can truly be happy with them, because wants rise ultimately from a lack felt within, from an infinite Source which cannot be satisfied by finite objects of this world. Like stones, that cannot fill the vast depth of the ocean, the gifts being offered by Lord Yama cannot fulfil the desires of a person. "O Lord, give not these things to me. They are of no use. May I repeat: I want only that which I asked for."

ajīryatām amṛtānām upetya jīryan martyaḥ kvadhasthaḥ prajānan
abhidhyāyan varṇaratipramodān, atidīrghe jīvite ko rameta. (28)

"A mortal having come face to face with the Immortal that you are, how could he ask for mortal things? By properly scrutinising the nature of the various attractive pleasurecentres of the world, who can ask for a long life? It is full of pain, and a long life is only extending the misery. No one who knows of That which perishes not, would want what you are offering."

When an object is presented before us, what is presented is nothing but a shape, colour and contour. The perception of an object is coupled with the longing for it, a meaning it represents; and this meaning tells us whether we should have it or not. It excites the desire to contact the object, which results in delight. Happiness is of three kinds:

priya, *moda* and *pramoda*. Happiness by perception of a desired object is *priya*. You get stimulated when you see a desired object. When you possess it, the happiness increases; this is *moda*. The happiness of enjoyment is still more intense; it is called *pramoda*.

When one enjoys an object, one forgets himself, and it is this self-forgetfulness that brings delight. The nearer an object comes, the more pleasure it gives, and the more you forget yourself. This happens when one experiences sense-pleasures in deep sleep and in *samadhi*; in all three states, self-consciousness is lost. But one does not know what happens in sleep and in sensory experience. When you are conscious of the object, you are not happy, and when you lose self-consciousness in the possession and enjoyment of it, you forget it and you are happy.

yasminn idam vicikitsanti mṛtyo yat sāmparāye mahati brūhi nas tat,
yo'yaṁ varo gūḍhamanupraviṣṭo nānyaṁ tasmān naciketā vṛṇīte. (29)

Clinching the whole matter, Nachiketas says: "I shall not be satisfied with all the things you offer. I shall be happy only with that thing about which even the gods have doubt. What happens to the soul in the last stage? Nachiketas shall not ask another question. Nachiketas wants nothing else than this."

The student has proved his worth. The glamour has not tempted him, and he has stood the test successfully. This is the transitional process which is necessary between the first two boons and the experience of immortality. The temptation of the Buddha is relevant here: everything was offered to him. The difficulty is that one cannot know them

as temptations, because they come as realities and it requires a superior intelligence to detect them and find out from where they have come, and why they have come. The condensed essence of all delights of all the worlds will come before us as a bar against our progress. But when *viveka* helps us, Truth shall reveal itself.

The world, through its laws, wants to prevent us from straying away; like sheep in a herd should we keep doing. Thus, the laws of the world to which we are tied take these forms, and the more we try to go away from them, the more they try to pull us towards them, and our attempts will be useless if they are inadequate. These are inconceivable ordeals. We cannot even imagine them now, and when we are really placed in such a condition, we will weep, not knowing where we are standing. Nachiketas is the representative of human character passing through a crisis. Yama is now pleased beyond measure and speaks no longer words of temptation, but words of knowledge which soothe Nachiketas' burning aspirations.

SECTION 2 – THE EXISTENCE OF THE SUPREME BEING

Just as the teaching of the Bhagavadgita commences in the second chapter, after having described Arjuna's confusion, the profound instruction of this Upanishad begins now—after Nachiketas having steadfastly passed the test.

The Two Ways: The Good and the Pleasant

anyac chreyo anyad utaiva preyaste ubhe nānārthe puruṣam sinītaḥ:
tayoḥ śreya ādadānasya sādhu bhavati, hīyate'rthād ya u preyo vṛṇīte. (1)

“There are two things in this world, and people pursue either this or that. These two may be regarded as the path of the pleasant, and the path of the good. Most people choose the former, and not the good. The pleasant is pleasing, but passing, and ends in pain. It is different from the good. But while the good need not necessarily be pleasant, the pleasant is not good.”

Both come to a person, and we are free to choose. But we choose the tinsel because it glitters. An experience seems to be pleasant because of the reaction of our nerves. A condition that is brought about as a result of a reaction is passing, and not being. Lack of discrimination is the reason for choosing pleasure; confusion of mind causes a wrong choice. When you grope in darkness, you fall into the pit, but you know it only after the fall. Similarly, the sense-world is darkness, and sense-objects come to ruin you, but the misguided mind cannot understand this. “Good comes to a person who chooses the good. But he who chooses the pleasant falls short of his aim.”

śreyaś ca preyaś ca manuṣyam etas tau samparītya vivinakti dhīraḥ.
śreyo hi dhīro’bhipreyaso vṛṇīte, preyo mando yoga-kṣemād vṛṇīte. (2)

“The dull-witted person chooses the pleasant: he wants to pass the day somehow. He does not know where or how the good is. The *dhira* or hero who is endowed with *viveka*, the power of discrimination, chooses the *shreyas* or the ultimate good.”

When the pleasant and good come to us, they come together, in a mixed form, so that you cannot understand them. The best example for this is the world itself: you can

use it as a passage to eternity, or for your pleasure. Yama tested Nachiketas in the same way as this world tests us. Temptations come every day, in every thing we see. We are caught in them because we are unable to distinguish between right and wrong. We do not know what will happen tomorrow. But our ignorance is so dark that we expect more pleasure, forgetting that death may come any moment. Death is the best teacher; there is not a better one: *vairagya* dawns by meditation on death. Suppose death comes to you in five minutes. Suppose you know it. What will you do? Will you act as you act now? You will act differently. It is true that we may die any moment. Yet, we do not think of it. Who prevents us from choosing the good? It is lack of understanding, *aviveka* or *ajnana*, which hides the defective side and shows only the pleasant aspects.

sa tvam priyān priyarūpāṁś ca kāmān abhidhyāyan naciketo, tyasrākṣīḥ;
naitāṁ sṛṅkāṁ vittamayīm avāpto yasyām majjanti bahavo manuṣyāḥ. (3)

"Nachiketas, you have carefully examined all these temptations, scrutinising the nature of their delight, and you have rejected them; you have not taken my garland of wealth in which people get lost."

At the very commencement, Yama makes a distinction between *shreyas* and *preyas*. It is not easy to do this in practical life. Most people unwittingly go for the *preyas*. This is illustrated by many stories. There once was a fakir who, loudly crying, carried a dog to the king. When some compassionate souls asked him for the reason of his wailing, he said: "My friend who did so much service to me is dying!" "Why?" asked the others. "Because of starvation,"

replied he. “But what do you have here in your bag?” “Provisions.” “Why don’t you give them to the dog?” And he answered: “Shedding tears is cheaper.”

Though it is a humorous tale, it reveals a truth. Ramakrishna Paramahamsa used a simile to illustrate the same thing: When the husband of the village woman dies, she will hit her head against the ground, but takes care to see that the ornament in her nose does not break.

These are tales telling of the human heart. We only shed empty tears, and call out God’s name half-heartedly. This is because very few can part with their possessions. The greatest obstacles in the spiritual path are the three *eshanas*. Even the greatest of friends get separated if one of them gives them trouble; so too attachment to wealth, sex or self-respect causes trouble. And anyone who hugs any one of them is a materialist, not merely one who believes in matter and disbelieves in God. The practical materialist cannot live without matter, but can live without God.

We think of life as a material event, and evaluate everything in terms of physical relations. We fly into tempers due to them, and pass sleepless nights due to them. And due to them we get confused as to our duty. Positively, they express themselves as attachment to sense-objects; negatively, as inertia or sleep. Who takes to spiritual life risks the danger of becoming a victim to stupor due to sense-control, putting even the mind to sleep. *Sadhakas* may get addicted to excessive sleep, or become gluttons, due to sense-control, thus just being sensuous in another way. While you deny satisfaction to one sense-organ, others will become powerful, like a river when its natural course is blocked may break open somewhere else, growing more

powerful than if it would follow its natural course. If the senses are denied their usual satisfaction, they become uncontrollable.

Seekers who have done *sadhana* for years may not progress well. Often, a silent complaint is heard from within that nothing has been achieved. This is so because, while they restrain themselves physically, they indulge on the psychic level. So, the most important thing in spiritual practice is honesty to oneself, because the path is of one's own Self, or Atman, and external aid is of little value. When we get tested by forces physical and celestial, we fail. Only a real *sadhaka* knows the difficulties. They may look silly, like a child's cry for his toy, but to him the toy is of deep importance. Seekers are placed in situations that tear their minds apart; mind and senses go amuck. *Pratyahara*,*sama* and *dama* in yoga are dams constructed on a river, not allowing any leakage, and when the water level increases, it is very hard to control.

Nachiketas, purposely tempted by Yama, is an example. The Guru places disciples in such situations to train them, to burnish them. They are blessed, because they are given an opportunity to overcome the obstacle, and they are also given strength. But those who practice self-control in seclusion for years, without a proper guru, fail when the test comes as a hard reality, because tests in the spiritual path are not announced like school-examinations. In the latter, date, subject, time and textbooks are pre-announced. But here, there is no such thing: you may be tested any time, on any subject, in any manner. So, one has always to be ready and vigilant. The Upanishad says, later on, that one who is

not careful falls. It is very easy to fall, and it is even pleasant, but it is very difficult to rise again.

"Nachiketas, I tested you and offered everything, and I am glad that you were not tempted even by the universal fire that bestows omniscience."

Subtle difficulties present themselves only in the subtle realms. In the physical realm, we have only physical difficulties, the *sthanidharmas*. Each level has a law of its own, and we cannot know the temptations and difficulties of other realms. They are only theories now. And when they come, they come not as temptations, but look like necessities. When you know that they are temptations, obstacles, you will not fall. They are temptations only so long as you do not understand them. If you know your enemy, you will be careful. So, they come with a mask, and you are deceived.

dūram ete viparīte visūcī, avidyā yā ca vidyeti jñātā:
vidyābhīpsinaṁ naciketasam manye, na tvā kāmā bahavo lolupantaḥ. (4)

The *shreyas* and *preyas* mentioned can also be called *vidya* and *avidya*: knowledge and ignorance. Desire is ignorance because it arises on account of a misunderstanding. Why does a moth fly into the fire? It does so because of its ignorance. It does not understand the structure of fire. Similarly, people go to sense-objects because they do not know that they are harmful. It is said that fire looks beautiful and probably cool to the eyes of the moth. This is what happens to all in regard to objects of desire. They jump into the fire, thinking that it is a soft bed. Why does the mind through the senses move to objects? Because due to *avidya* it sees something in them, like the

moth does in the fire. We see in the objects something which is not really there. The coolness is not in the fire, and yet it is seen by the moth. Children sometimes go and touch a snake, not knowing what it is.

We desire objects, not knowing what they are made of. They appear as one thing, but they are made of something else. The objects are not made in the way the eyes and senses see them. They are not solid; they are not beautiful; they cannot give pleasure. Not only this: they can bind you and hurl you into more and more misery and even cause rebirth. In fact, rebirth is due to unfulfilled desires. But everyone has to pass through every difficulty. Otherwise, they are not known, as they cannot be avoided by mere theoretical understanding. Solid objects are forces and not physical bodies. They appear as solid because our body appears to be solid, but neither of them is. All are forces whirling in space, and they appear as solid due to our sense of touch. When thissense is not functioning, you cannot know solid objects, and so too with all the five senses; they deceive you. This is *avidya* or ignorance: the inability to appreciate and understand the true nature of things and yet run to them. But *vidya* is different.

"Nachiketas, you are a student of *shreyas* because you were not attracted by any of the objects I tempted you with."

avidyāyām antare vartamānāḥ, svayaṁ dhīrāḥ paṇḍitam manyamānāḥ.
dandramyamāṇāḥ pariyanti mūdhāḥ, andhenaiva nīyamānā yathāndhāḥ. (5)

Yama says: "People who are sunk in ignorance, considering themselves great heroes, well-learned,

understanding everything, are like blind men led by one who is blind himself. They run hither and thither, finding not what they seek."

Foolish are such ones. We take advice from people who do not understand. How can it be helpful? But this is the world. People run here and there for happiness because of their desires, but find it nowhere. They are misguided, and it is unfortunate that there is no one who can see things as they are. Everyone is on the same level of learning. Not only this: the blind thinks that he sees, the ignorant thinks that he is learned. Learning itself becomes a form of ignorance, just as our happiness is itself ignorance because we think we are happy when we come into contact with sense-objects.

Ignorance has two sides, positive and negative. Negatively, you are not conscious of it at all. It is *avarana*, a veil; what you experience in deep sleep. Positively, it is called *vikshepa*. It projects itself outside, making you think of what is not there. That is the dream state. Which one is better? In dream we suffer more than in deep sleep, and it may appear that sleep is better. Or you may prefer the false happiness of dreams. The very same *vikshepa* also works in the waking state.

There are three kinds of realities: *pratibhasika*, *vyavaharika* and *paramarthika*. The world of waking appears to have a practical value, a utility; but it is as much a world of ignorance as the world of dream from the point of view of *paramarthika-satta*. The objects are much more real than the dream objects. Our present happiness and sorrows seem to be more meaningful than dream happiness or dream sorrows. The fact is that both are *avidya* or ignorance—waking and dreaming. In sleep which is

avarana, as well as in dream or waking which are *vikshepa*, ignorance prevails. On account of this, people think that there is nothing wrong with the world and foolishly imagine that they are learned. Can you regard a dream pandit as a really learned man? Likewise, in the waking state you are ignorant, and so is your teacher.

na sāmparāyaḥ pratibhāti bālam pramādyantaṁ vitta-mohena mūḍham:
ayaṁ loko nāsti para iti mānī, punaḥ punar vaśam āpadyate me. (6)

"The hereafter does not shine for the simple-minded, who think this is the only world, there is no other; just as the waking world does not exist to a dreaming person. People get deluded because of wealth and greed for things, and in this ignorance of youth, health, fame and position, they proclaim: 'This world is real, and there is nothing beyond.' These persons come to me," says Yama. What he means is that they undergo unending births and deaths. Falling under the law of *karma*, they do not learn until they are given a painful lesson by nature itself. There is not only birth and death, but there is suffering. Those cannot escape Yama's clutches. They are proud even when they do not know anything.

śravaṇāyāpi bahubhir yo na labhyaḥ, śṛṇvanto'pi bahavo yaṁ na vidyuḥ
āścaryo vaktā kuśalo'sya labdhā, āścaryo jñātā kuśalānuśiṣṭaḥ. (7)

"My dear child, this mysterious Being of all beings is difficult to understand. It is difficult even to hear, and there are people who cannot understand It even then. A wonder is the explainer of It; wonderful is that person who can

understand It when taught by a competent one. Both are wonders: the teacher and the taught.” Teachers of this knowledge are rare indeed, and rare indeed are the students.

The second section of the Upanishad is an analysis of the nature of duty and desire: *shreyas* and *preyas*. Their whispers are heard by us simultaneously—one trying to overpower the other, sometimes creating a small tumult, so that they cannot be distinguished. Daily life is one dilemma, the conscience speaking of *shreyas*, and the lower self murmuring that pleasure is desirable in preference to duty. Why do people mostly listen to the latter voice? Because the objects connected to pleasure are visible to the senses, while the side of duty is not so visible. We believe in what we see, but find it hard to believe in the invisible. The senses are connected with objects of pleasure, but duty is something which the senses cannot understand.

Often duty seems to be painful and imposed. The reason is simple: we know pleasure will come by contact with objects, but we do not know what will happen in the other world. Limited to this world of senses, we cannot see the other realms, so we do not concern ourselves with them. And for all practical purposes, we take for granted that they do not exist at all. The ignorant, proud of empty learning, do not pay proper attention towards duty; they do not believe in the ultimate good, in God and the other worlds, but they believe in objects, even though they are perishable, even though they may bring death, humiliation, deprivation, because of their visibility, and this, because of the indivisibility of the good and the other worlds.

Both duty and desire, the good and the pleasant, have been examined by Nachiketas. This position is not one of acquisition, but of understanding, of discrimination. He is the example of a seeker who got over temptations by comprehending, and not because they were curbed by law, scriptures or the guru. When the disciple understands the true situation, no ordinance by any of them is necessary. When we are awake, we don't have to be told not to drown ourselves in a river. Nachiketas realised that objects are not to be acquired for enjoyment, but to be understood and studied. They are not for hugging. The world is not to be possessed. No one can possess the world, because everyone is a part of it; belongs to it in an integral way. So an individual fails when he treats it as an object of enjoyment, for the world and all its objects are an opportunity to train ourselves in understanding.

The world is one of the ways in which God peeps through space and time: "*Shreyas* or *preyas*—what do you want?" He asks. Most people are like Duryodhana and want adoration rather than the silent divinity that does not reveal itself to the senses. The more we realise the interconnectedness and harmony of being, the nearer are we to God. The more the separation between man and man, the greater the assumption of the individual, the more are we away from Him. This is what Yama implies in the conversation with Nachiketas: that the silent music of the Spirit is drowned in the clamour of the senses.

Though God is speaking to us daily, we do not hear Him because of the noise the senses set up. We see the colour and the panorama of the world they present us, but not Him. This is the meaning of 'the other world is not

visible', which includes God also, as well as the astral, causal and the absolute. Realms beyond the physical are less and less separated in their contents or units. While in the physical world we see many persons, one thing having no relation to another, the higher we go into the subtle realms, the nearer do persons and things appear to come—just as in a triangle with a wide base there is also an apex, and as the two sides go higher towards it the distance between the two sides becomes less and less until they meet.

In the Absolute, people come together; and when you realise the intimacy of things, your love for them diminishes, just as you do not love your body the way you love sense- objects. There are what is called nether regions, lower than this physical world, which are inhabited by *asuras*, demons and the like—beings who are more sensuous, wrathful and body-conscious. There are seven worlds above and seven below ours, which means that there can be states of consciousness worse than the human, ignorance deeper than the human, and knowledge higher than the human. The seven higher realms are of great subtlety and intimacy, so that when we reach the highest, one reflects in the other and one becomes the image of the other. This is omniscience or cosmic consciousness: everyone is everyone else.

We do not like each other because of our believing in the reports of the senses, and thus we are said to live in *mrityu-loka*: the world of desires and self-affirmation. The higher world is not visible to the ignorant, and so we cling to this world. If we were aware of all the higher ones, we would no longer think: 'O, I am so far from Truth', but feel like a dreamer who is aware of the waking world while in

dream. Like a sudden waking up from dream, there is sometimes a sudden awakening into Reality. This is called *sadyo-mukti*.

na nareṇāvareṇa proktā eṣa suvijñeyo bahudhā cintyamānaḥ:
ananya-prokte gatir atra nāsty aṇīyān hy atarkyam
aṇupramānāt. (8)

This knowledge cannot be had by personal effort alone. You cannot get it by reading a book. The teacher of it must be an expert—so subtle is this knowledge. "If an inferior teacher teaches about Him, this knowledge will not enter you, as He is thought of in many ways. But there remains no doubt when He is taught by one who knows Him as himself. Subtler than the atom is this truth. You may be able to see an atom, but this cannot be seen."

Knowledge is not words, but spirit spoken. The teacher is like the honeybee who draws the honey from all books and gives you the essence. The force behind the words spoken by the Guru is important. It is his power that is conveyed through his words. Not merely this; the proximity to the teacher is itself a force. The words he speaks, his thoughts and the good notion he has about the disciple are important. Unless it is taught by a superior teacher, it cannot be understood. Without him, there is no way.

naiṣā tarkeṇa matir āpaneyā, proktānyenaiva sujñānāya
preṣṭha:
yāṁ tvam āpas satyadhritir batāsi; tvādṛṅ no bhūyān
naciketaḥ praṣṭā. (9)

"It is not only that you cannot attain this knowledge without a teacher, but also that you cannot attain it by logic and reasoning. But, my dear, taught by one who knows the truth, it is well understood."

Mental processes belong to the realm of phenomena, but truth does not; and so there is no connection between them. Even scriptures speak in a language, and words cannot convey it. It cannot be communicated to another for want of means, say the scriptures. It is insight—the intuition of the Guru that reveals this knowledge. The intuition of the Guru reveals itself as intuition in the disciple. They are not two persons; they are only two centres—one revealed and the other unrevealed. "If seekers there be, if questioners there be, may we have seekers, questioners like you, Nachiketas!"

The Requirement of Steadfast Renunciation and Meditation

jānāmy aham śevadhir ity anityam, na hy adhruvaiḥ prāpyate hi dhruvaṁ tat
tato mayā naciketaś cito'gnir anityair dravyaiḥ prāptavān asmi nityam. (10)

There is a transition of instruction between the lower and the higher, *vaishvanara-agni* and *hiranyagarbha*. "I know that all the treasures of the world are perishable, and that the perishable cannot be a means to the imperishable. Yet, as a candidate of the celestial realm, I performed the *vaishvanara* sacrifice. I have reached the everlasting by impermanent means."

This is a difficult mantra to understand, and various commentators have different opinions about it. Some think it is spoken by Yama; some others, by Nachiketas. There is no '*uvacha*' in the Upanishad like in the Bhagavadgita. However, it cannot be Nachiketas saying it for at least one reason. The speaker says, 'I have performed the *nachiketas*-

agni', so they must be Yama's words. Because Nachiketas has only heard about it but has not yet performed it.

Anandagiri's comment, which has been accepted by many, says that this is the teaching of Yama to Nachiketas, revealing the former's own personal condition. "Do you know how I have become Yama, the Lord of Death? It is by performing the *vaishvanara-agni*. I know it does not by itself lead to the absolute Truth. It is *anitya* and through it one cannot reach the *nitya*." This means that nothing of this world can lead you to the imperishable; even the higher realms are, like this world, for the senses even though objects come closer in these higher realms because of their subtlety. The residents of *brahma-loka* do not have a physical or even subtle body, but have only a causal one, merely one step below the Absolute where it makes no difference as to where things are; everything is everywhere. But there is something higher than these levels: the subject of the third boon, which Yama refuses to teach.

What is the wonder of this? The wonder is that nothing is the means to it. The non-eternal cannot take you there; and everything you have—body, mind, intellect etc.—are non-eternal. "Then what is the means to it?" is the great question which Yama refuses to answer. But Nachiketas wants to know only that. "People say it is 'something'. It must be, because we are asked to do good, show affection to others. A rule of righteousness is imposed upon us. So, there must be something, but what is it? When one approaches it, one loses himself. And when I am not there, neither is the other. If the subject is not, the object is also not. This is the mystery: that something seems to be there, and yet it appears as not there." Thus, Yama says that

nothing that is non-eternal can be a help in knowing the eternal. Logic, your possessions, all that is conceivable by your thoughts, is perishable and cannot help you. Hence, in the realisation of God, nothing can come to your aid but God Himself. The human element, everything sensual and external must be cast aside, and only the divine element relied upon. The question of Nachiketas is how to bring about this transition from the human to the divine.

When the soul is released of its individuality, what happens to it? No one has given an answer to this. When asked by Maitreyi, Yajnavalkya says that the question itself ceases to exist when the answer reveals itself. The questioner and the answer vanish: 'Where one speaks to another, sees another, understands another, communication is possible. But where there is no one to speak, no one to see, and no one to understand, who is to communicate to whom?' Yama comes to a similar conclusion by taking Nachiketas to the universal knowledge of *hiranyagarbha*, to That Which Is, *asti*. We have to know It as That Which Is. Even the state of universal knowledge is comparatively transient, because in it everything is an object of omniscience. The subject-object relationship exists even there. But Reality is going beyond everything, because there is not even that everything in the Absolute. Though eternal means alone is the eternal realised; this is the mystery. Because of the subtlety of this wisdom it is said that a Guru is necessary as an embodiment of insight which can be conveyed, but not spoken or written.

kāmasyāptiṁ jagataḥ pratiṣṭhāṁ krator ānantyaṁ abhayasya pāram

stoma-mahad urugāyam pratiṣṭhāṁ dṛṣṭvā dhṛtyā dhīro naciketo'tyasrākṣīḥ. (11)

This is a description of the state of *mahatattva* or *hiranyagarbha* – the highest state that can be reached in all creation, the satisfaction of all desires. Here, all your loves and affections get fulfilled, like flowing rivers finding their contentment in reaching the ocean. The movement of desires to objects is a blind activity of the senses, continuing until this stage is reached. All desires are due to a sense of separation from the beloved object. The longing to unite oneself with that from which one is separated is desire. The urge to come together is desire. So, when you come into union with an object, you seem to be in a state of fulfilment. But, says the Upanishad, this is not really fulfilling wants, because they rise again, like a creditor coming again and again until his dues are cleared. If they had really been fulfilled, why should desires rise again? They are not satisfied with what you give, because in a so-called enjoyment, you do not unite. The whole world cannot make you happy because you never can come into union with it, and because you fail in this, you take another birth. Yet, you do not learn the lesson. Your understanding cannot arise, precisely due to the desires. Satisfaction comes only in the ocean of *hiranyagarbha*. Here, you reach a state of perpetual balance. You do not stand opposed to the object of desire, as you do now. You are able to move freely into the very soul of it. There is no isolation of subject-object, and hence there is perpetual happiness.

Hiranyagarbha, the universal mind or intelligence, is also the support of all the worlds, the cause of all creation. The *virat* is an external or physical expression of that

internal *hiranyagarbha*. Just as our mental condition supports our body, *hiranyagarbha* supports all the worlds. Here, all sacrifices, all good works, all charity, find their rewards, because from *indra-loka*, *swarga-loka* and other realms, you come back, but from *brahma-loka* there is no return. Tearless is this region, because there are no desires. Where there is no desire, there is no fear, because there is no opposition or counterpart to one another. One flows, merges into the other. All your praises reach *hiranyagarbha*. You may praise anyone, it reaches Him. All words that you utter are a description of His Being. He is the only object of praise. When you call anyone, you call Him. When you taunt anyone, you taunt Him, because He is the One Ultimate Being. He is the grand Goal of expression in action and speech. Can you imagine this state? Your head will reel. Nachiketas rejected even this, because it is a part of creation.

"Having seen this Supreme Being, O wise Nachiketas, you have rejected even this!"

taṁ durdarśaṁ gūḍham anupraviṣṭaṁ guhāhitaṁ
gahvareṣṭham purāṇam
adhyātma-yogādhigamena devam matvā dhīro harṣa-śokau
jahāti. (12)

What did he choose, then? *Hiranyagarbha* is the highest satisfaction, but the seeking soul must abandon It and ask for that which is hidden even behind It. What happens to a person when he overcomes the sense of individuality, was Nachiketas' question, and Yama, satisfied, begins to answer.

That about which even the gods have doubt, about which even the scriptures do not speak adequately, what is That—That Being which cannot be perceived, either by the

eyes or any other sense-organ? He is the most hidden of all hidden secrets, the mysterious divine Being. Where is He hidden? In the jungles? In the caves? In the sky? In the forest? What a mystery! People go to different places seeking Him, but He is hidden in the bottom of the very seeker himself. You carry Him wherever you go, yet you ask for Him. He cannot be seen because He is what sees through the eyes. He cannot be thought of, because He is that which thinks through the mind. So deeply hidden is He in your own heart that you cannot see Him. You yourself stand as an object to Him. You are an empirical subject, while He is the Absolute Subject or the *paramarthika-satta*. Most ancient is this Being.

He was here before your coming into existence, before creation came into existence. Before the creation of the cosmos, even behind the *sankalpa* of the cosmic Creator He was. And so, even the gods came into being after Him. Temporary, transient things cannot be a means to the realisation of this Truth. There is something fundamentally wrong in our approach to it. You can liken it to a supreme emperor whom one can approach by no means; yet he is approachable. Even the ground upon which you tread to see the king is his. Similarly, even the life that we possess that we possess is His. It is difficult, thus, to understand how to reach Him. Nothing can please Him because He has everything. You cannot offer anything to Him because everything belongs to Him, and you yourself are His property. Then, what is the way? Yama does not want to explain it, because it cannot be explained, as all questions imply the connection of a means with an end, while He is neither a means nor an end.

By the practice of *adhyatma-yoga* this God of gods is known. This yoga is the way to God-realisation. In the whole Kathopanishad, there is no explanation of what this *adhyatma-yoga* is. We have to go to other Upanishads, like the Brhadaranyaka— especially in the discourses of Yajnavalkya to Janaka and Maitreyi—for a description of it. “There is no conceivable consciousness after the annihilation of individuality. Then you have nothing before you, of what can you be conscious? And yet I say it is consciousness; for while there is nothing to be conscious of, still It Is consciousness, because everything has merged into It. This is the Absolute.”

Adhyatma-yoga is a state of meditation where there is no thinking. Where there are objects to think of, it is *hiranyagarbha*, but where everything has merged into consciousness, nothing remains to be explained.

“It is attainable by him through whom it is sought,” is Sankara’s explanation to this *mantra*. The seeker and the sought are the same. “One, having known that primal God deeply hidden in the cave of the heart, abandons joy and sorrow because they belong to the world of thought.”

etac chrutvā samparigṛhya martyaḥ pravṛhya dharmyam
aṇum etam āpya
sa modate modanīyaṁ hi labdhvā vivṛtaṁ sadma
naciketasam manye. (13)

Yama continues: “On hearing this and reaching the Essence, the Source of joy, one rises to a status of ecstatic consciousness. Nachiketas, for you this gate is open.”

It is difficult to say what happens to him who catches a glimpse of it. The Atman is the support of all *dharma*, the supreme law. Every law is but an expression of His nature.

This supreme righteousness is *anu*, the subtlest of all existences, and once we have seen the Atman, we know all laws. Saints are therefore the vehicles of righteousness. They do not follow the Manu Smirti or any other law, but the *smritis* follow them. If one listens to this supreme *dharma*, one gets transported into spiritual ecstasy. One becomes supremely joyous, because the object of joy has been attained. If your son whom you thought dead came back to you, how joyous you would be! You have lost your own Self and you have found it now! That which you have been seeking for years and years has come!

While the gates of heaven are closed to ordinary people, they are open to such seekers as Nachiketas who have a clarified understanding. Really speaking, the gates of heaven are always open. What happens is that people lose their eyesight when they go near them. This happens every day to us, in deep sleep. We touch them, but we become unconscious and blindly pass them by, and then say that they are closed. Our own desires make us pass them by when we try to approach these gates, by saying: 'We are unfulfilled! No going unless we are fulfilled!' Like the worldly wife of one who wants to take *sannyas* forcibly drags him away, the desires drag us from that high state. They give us a blow on our head when we are about to see God face to face. No man of desires can see God.

When Sri Krishna was to visit Duryodhana's palace, Vidura told the people that they would not see Him. The reason behind this is that the Lord cannot be seen by men of desires.

anyatra dharmād anyatrādharmād anyatrāsmāt kṛtākṛtāt.
anyatra bhūtāc ca bhavyāc ca yat tat paśyasi tad vada. (14)

“Glad am I, O Lord! Please, tell me more!” says Nachiketas. Now that Yama has answered, Nachiketas will not cease to question. After having been given a wonderful description of the highest, he says: “Tell me what is other than *dharma* and *adharma*, beyond what is done and not done—That which Is.” That which is neither *dharma* nor *adharma*, neither truth nor falsehood, neither goodness nor otherwise, neither subject nor object—what is that? Where *dharma* and *adharma* have their play, where subject and object come together, is world-consciousness. What is That which shoots up like a spark when the match is struck, consuming that which is hidden in it? What is That which is neither the done nor the not-done, midway between doing and not-doing, like the karma yoga of the Bhagavadgita? That which is not past or future—not coming by your effort and also not otherwise.

That which Yama sees is not a content of creation, because what is seen is *hiranyagarbha* which has already been passed over. You must go beyond creation. It is not contained in space, and so not in time. It is an eternal Presence. It is said to be ‘here and now’, meaning that it is infinite and eternal. The question of Nachiketas is itself a hint of what he seeks from Yama. That which exists as the non-interfering Principle in all, that which is the Seer of the activity of the cosmos—that is the Being which he wants.

sarve vedā yat padam āmananti tapāṁsi sarvāṇi ca yad vadanti,
yad icchanto brahmacaryaṁ caranti, tat te padaṁ saṁgraheṇa bravīmi: aum ity etat. (15)

This mantra is echoed in the Bhagavadgita. Yama says: “I shall tell you about the supreme Abode which you are

asking for, which the Vedas extol in all their mantras; for which people do *tapas*, observe *vratas*, do charity. It is Aum."

For what sake do people observe *brahmacharya*? They control their energies to pierce through the fortress of ignorance, to melt the flint of *avidya*, *kama* and *karma*. No passionate person can do this. No one who lacks *brahmacharya* can behold this Being. People think that the Vedas speak of many gods, but they speak of one God only. They speak of the same God in different languages. The Veda itself says, *ekam sat vipra bahuda vadanti*: The one God is spoken of variegatedly in different expressions of ecstasy by the sages to whom the mantras were revealed.

When the Kumaras went to Dakshinamurthy for wisdom, the answer was silence. At least Yama says one word. The Mandukya Upanishad describes what this Om is: a vast reservoir of knowledge and power, the symbol of the Absolute Existence, of Brahman—*saguna* and *nirguna*, accessible and inaccessible. In the form of creation, it is accessible; but formless, as the Absolute, it is inaccessible. It is the visible and the invisible. It is in creation, and it stands beyond it as well.

The chant of Om is in itself a great *sadhana*. It puts the whole system into spiritual balance. "This is the supreme mantra," says Yama, "the supreme Brahman, *akshara*." *Akshara* means a letter, a word, a phrase. It also means imperishable. So it is all this. If at all you can reach Brahman by any means, it is by Om. It is the Supreme, beyond which there is nothing.

etadd hy evākṣaram brahma, etadd hy evākṣaram param
etadd hy evākṣaram jñātvā, yo yad icchati tasya tat. (16)

etad ālambanaṁ śreṣṭham etad ālambanam param
etad ālambanaṁ jñātvā brahma-loke mahīyate. (17)

These two mantras describe the glory of *pranava* or *omkara*, the symbol of the Supreme for the realisation of which people observe all vows, perform austerities and practice meditation. It is the imperishable, and it is both the manifest and the unmanifest, by knowing which one gains access to everything. When you chant or meditate on Om, you have with you whatever you want. You become possessed of all things by realising it. You can possess only that which you have seen and over which you have control. Here, knowledge and power merge into a single experience. One who performs this *upasana* diffuses his personality into Om. The worship of a *sadhaka* is to get into the soul of his *devata*, and when the *upasana* is complete, the *devata* enters the worshiper, and both become the same. *Pranava* is not a symbol in the sense of the term. A word you write on paper may represent a name or description. When you write 'tree', you do not have the tree on the paper. You have the symbol which makes you call a tree into consciousness. But Om is not like that. It is a vibration that is produced in our system, and it is the symbol of the symbol; a secondary symbol of Brahman. It is a chant, and not a written word. It is a force or power engulfing our personality when we chant it. Om emanates from the centre of the body, which is the navel. The original condition of *pranava* is not audible. Coming from the subtle body, it becomes audible only when finally uttered by the mouth. The initiation into it is most important, because this chant and meditation is a great art, and is difficult. Once one flows into the chant of

Om, one transcends all mantras. Om has no *devata*—it is all things, and to enter into it is to enter into creation. It is the supreme imperishable Brahman.

It is Brahman because it gives access to everything, and having experienced it or known it in realisation, or having become it, one becomes fit to possess anything anywhere. The answer to your needs flows to you from all directions when this Supreme becomes manifest in your consciousness, and you become an instrument of its manifestation in this world.

While all other supports will leave you, it will not leave you. It is the best of, and support of, all supports—knowing which you reach *brahma-loka*. In its manifest form, it represents *brahma-loka*. And in its unmanifest form, it represents the Absolute, expanding itself gloriously. This is the description of the soul's liberation by stages, *krama-mukti*. This syllable Om is the Atman or Brahman about which Nachiketas asked. What is that which transcends everything, was his question. That is Om. Nothing else but Om can become a vehicle for the expression of the Highest, because it is general and not particularised. The content of Om is the Imperishable.

The Eternal Indestructable Soul

na jāyate mriyate vā vipaścin nāyaṁ kutaścin na babhūva kaścit:
ajo nityaḥ śaśvato'yam purāṇo na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre. (18)

"This Supreme Knower, *vipashchit*, is not born, never comes into being at any time, and so has no death." This Atman is the Knower—not a knower in the ordinary sense

of the term. He is Knowingness; the capacity to know. He does not know things like the mind knows or sees. The knower of the Atman does not exist. Who is to know the knower? If he is known, he is not the Atman.

When the form changes, the essence does not change. Such is the Atman. He has not come from somewhere; he has no place; he occupies all this universal space. He has neither a cause nor an effect, nor can he go anywhere nor become anything. Creation does not apply to him. The whole of it is a vehicle for him, and nothing happens to him when it changes. "He is unborn, eternal, perpetual; the most ancient. While the body is destroyed, he does not undergo transformation. Most wonderful is he!"

hantā cen manyate hantuṁ hataś cen manyate hatam,
ubhau tau na vijānīto nāyaṁ hanti na hanyate. (19)

"If one imagines that He is destroyed when the body is destroyed, or if one imagines that He destroys something, both do not know. Neither the destroyer nor the destroyed know the truth when they think that the Atman goes with the body." The body appears to move because of it being contained in space, but the Atman is the presupposition of even space, and thus cannot move. He who thinks that He can be destroyed knows not the truth because he thinks He is an object, whereas He is the supreme Subject. People look at the Atman like they look at an object, but He is not that either. He is subtler than the mind and intellect, and hence cannot be seen.

aṇor aṇīyān mahato mahīyān, ātmāsya jantor nihito guhāyām:
tam akratuḥ paśyati vīta-śoko dhātu-prasādān mahimānam ātmanaḥ. (20)

“Smaller than the smallest atom is the Atman. Most expansive is He, greater than the great. Because He is the innermost existence in every thing, He is seated in the hearts of all beings.” Never is it possible to explain the meaning of the term ‘Atman’, because when you start to explain it, you make Him an object of the world. This Atman, the Soul of all beings, is the Heart; not the physical one that pumps blood, but the Centre of our personality; the very Source of all that we are; the Essence of our being. *Shantoyamatma*—this Atman is peace. He is the flooding of feeling that rises in us when we lose consciousness of our personality and yet are conscious. When we forget the existence of everything outside ourselves, and ourselves too, the Essence of this is the Atman. The ‘I’ has a soul behind it which is He, speaking through the entire personality. Such is this mysterious, magnificent, elusive Atman who is hidden in all beings. How can we behold Him? “Freed from all sorrows does one behold the Atman.”

Ceasing from willing of all kinds, you behold Him. Any *sankalpa* prevents His manifestation. If you assert yourself, either by feeling or willing or thinking, you block His ray. To affirm anything is to have *sankalpa*, and such a one cannot be a *yogin*. Think not, affirm not, will not—this is the way! He who has no personality, who wants not anything, becomes fit for His realisation. How does He manifest? In whom and when? *Dhatuh prasadat*—what this means is a matter of controversy. All commentators of the Bhakti School, especially the Vaishvanas, say that it means the grace of God. *Dhatu* is creator, and *prasada* is grace. Your effort has to cease, because any effort is an obstacle to His revelation. When effort ceases, God’s grace unveils that

Atman. "It is *advaita vasana*, or an inclination for *advaita*—realisation by the grace of *ishvara*," says Dattatreya in the Guru Gita.

How God's Grace arises in the *jiva* is a question difficult to answer, and the difficulty has been accepted by everyone, even by Sankara. Knowledge arises by the will of God. But Sankara's commentary differs from the one of the Bhakti-School. He interprets '*dhatuh prasadat*' in an *advaitic* manner. "Through tranquillity of the substances which constitute the personality is the Atman beheld." *Prasada* is tranquillity which tends to universality. When the whole personality becomes tranquil, when there is a tendency to universality, the entire person gets focused in consciousness. This is Sankara's explanation. We may accept both. God is everything. He is the other as well as your own Self. If He is the other, you need God's grace. But He is within also. God can send His grace from within, but can also send it from without, and then it is that you behold His glory. It is not described in books. It is beheld directly.

The Opposite Characteristics of the Supreme

āsīno dūraṁ vrajati, śayāno yāti sarvataḥ:
kastam madāmadaṁ devam mad anyo jñātum arharti. (21)

"How can one conceive Him?" Nachiketas may think. Yama answers, "Sitting, He moves to all distances. Lying down in one place, He goes everywhere." He moves not an inch, and yet He is the fastest of all things, faster than even light. Before our mind reaches *brahma-loka*, that Atman is already there. Here is the Thing "whose centre is everywhere, but whose circumference is nowhere", as the mystic saying goes. You cannot describe Him by the words

we know. Only by such enigmatic statements is anything said about Him.

Who can know the Atman? "Except to the blessed ones, like me, who has access to Him, He is not known, this God of gods who enjoys and yet does not enjoy, who is the subject as well as the object, who is within and without."

That fortunate divine person who has the knowledge of truth in its essentiality is a *dharma-raja*.

aśarīraṁ śarīreṣu, anavastheṣv avasthitam,
mahāntaṁ vibhum ātmānam matvā dhīro na śocati. (22)

Once having beheld the Atman who is bodilessly present in all bodies, who is stable, and in every process of transformation without undergoing any transformation, the wise grieves not and rises into rapture." Just as breaking a pot does not break the space within it, the conditions that affect the body do not affect the Atman. When the pot moves, the space within does not move, nor is it destroyed. The Atman is present in all bodies, unaffected and unchanging. The bold, heroic and fortunate one who has known Him is the highest being and has no sorrow. Stage by stage we are taken from world- consciousness to that of *hiranyagarbha*, and finally to consciousness of the Absolute.

The Conditions of Knowing Him

nāyam ātmā pravacanena labhyo na medhayā, na bahunā śrutena:
yamevaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyas tasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛṇute tanūṁ svām. (23)

This is a very famous, often quoted verse: "Not by speech can He be known; not by the intellect, not even by

hearing." Speech returns baffled. Who expresses speech? The Atman! Who can express the Atman? Even rationality, His partial expression through the *buddhi* which is a modification of *prakriti*, cannot express Him. Frail is the intellect when it tries to stretch itself beyond its limits. As a person who cuts the branch on which he sits will fall down, he who tries to know the Atman through the intellect will break. All the faculties of the human mind break down when they try to turn towards the Atman. "He is known only by him whom He chooses." If God chooses, you may know; otherwise not. This is the interpretation of the Bhakti School. It is God's grace that He gives you *darshan*. By a miracle taking place, you can see God; not by ordinary effort.

But Sankara's interpretation is unique: It is not that someone chooses, because, for Sankara, that someone does not exist to choose. His understanding of this part of the mantra is: "He is beheld only by That which is the seeker himself." That which you behold is within yourself, is the meaning. Who is the seeker? Is he outside the Atman? God is the prompter even behind the seeker. *Sadhana* is not possible without Him. Rather than from without, the choice has to come from within. The seeker and the sought are one. The sought or God is not outside the seeker, choosing him arbitrarily; if it were so, we would have to attribute partiality to Him. Reality is one, and on the basis of this doctrine, Sankara opines that Self-knowledge is an inexplicable wonder: it arises—that is all. It is not caused by the *jiva*, because he has no freedom. But, if God is the cause, what conditions does He impose? If you say it is the *jiva's* karmas, you limit His power; so even that is not a

satisfactory explanation. Hence, either you accept that God's ways are mysterious, ununderstandable, or knowledge is a miracle, and when you say miracle, you cannot say anything. By the passage of time, by the fructification of good deeds, by the process of the universe, by the grace of God—by a mysterious combination of all these factors which the *jiva* cannot understand, God is revealed. When He reveals Himself, the person (*jiva*) is no more. God reveals Himself to Himself. It is not an end reached by the effort of human personality.

The whole difficulty is expressed in a single statement: the Atman is the subject, not the object. Thus, He cannot be manipulated by an instrument. Speech, mind and intellect are signified by the terms *pravacanena medhaya*. Speech is indicative of all senses. So, not through them, not through the mind, not through the intellect can the Atman be realised, because these faculties have a tendency to move outward. They catch the object, not the subject. The mind never catches the mind. Both the mind and intellect work on the dictate of the senses which are untrustworthy, concluding that all reality is confined to phenomena. Any description of the Atman is given by them, and they cannot conceive of anything other than objects. This mystery of *atmasakshatkara* is given in the second half of the verse. The Atman chooses the Atman. God chooses God. It is Self-efflorescence. To such a fortunate being who has so withdrawn himself into himself that he is indistinguishable from the Supreme Subject, to such a one is the Atman revealed—not by process, but instantaneously. It is a timeless flash of a sudden consciousness which is called *atmasakshatkara*. It comes by the maturity of one's

sadhana. The links of this process are indescribable. The last occurrence is such that it cannot be regarded as an effect of all the preceding ones, though it comes as a result of these. It is beyond the causational process.

nāvirato duścaritān nāśānto nāsamāhitaḥ
nāśānta-mānaso vāpi prajñānenainam āpnuyāt. (24)

There is no chance of success in any walk of life without moral purification: "Not he who has not ceased from bad conduct; not he who has no tranquillity within; not he who has no collectedness of thought can hope to achieve this Atman." A person should cease from every kind of evil in thought, word and deed, and then achieve calmness of the senses, and then of the mind and intellect.

The three words: *navirata*, *nasharta*, *nashantamanasa*, represent three processes of self-withdrawal. In the lowest stage, we behave like animals, committing harms of various kinds; a gross attitude of the tendency to see ourselves separate from each other. This apparent isolatedness of individuals and things, which itself is due to wrong thinking, is affirmed by evil conduct. While all is interrelated, we see it as differentiated. This itself is bad enough, and is called a metaphysical evil. But it is made worse by violence for the acquirement or abandonment of things. Then it becomes a moral evil in addition to the metaphysical one. The wrong is not only committed, but also affirmed by harmful conduct, and thus it is a moral vice and against spirituality.

When you have somehow succeeded in extracting yourself from this illusion, you have other difficulties, subtler in nature. Even if you avoid violence of any kind, you will have no tranquillity within. Calmness of mind is

different from moral goodness. You may be morally good, but not tranquil in mind. Spirituality is both inner goodness and mental calm. This *shanti* within becomes an effective instrument in overcoming *duscharita* or evil conduct. You have to be good even when you are alone, not merely to others, socially.

Even this inactivity of the senses is not total harmony. Spirituality is collectedness of consciousness within, one-pointedness and equilibrium. This is the state known as *samahita*—a total surrender of personality; not a mathematical, but a spiritual total. This Atman, the completeness of being, is attained only by inner composure; not by being intellectual.

yasya brahma ca kṣatraṁ ca ubhe bhavata odanaḥ
mṛtyur yasyopasecanaṁ ka itthā veda yatra saḥ. (25)

Grand is this Atman, marvel is His being! This is a very interesting and humorous mantra. Literally translated, it means: "He is That to which the *brahmin* and *kshatriya* are both food, and death itself is its condiment."

But there is deeper meaning to it. The *brahmana* and *kshatriya* represent knowledge and power, internality and externality, spirit and matter, consciousness and object. The words *brahmin* and *kshatriya* do not signify personalities, but the spirit behind them. In the Atman there is a blending of absolute knowledge and power. "Some philosophers hold that there is no power in the Atman, because power means action, and since He is universal, there can be no question of it, because to us power is always particularised, an exercise of authority. But His is *shakti*, the capacity; not karma or doing something. The whole universe is a standing example of His power. You know how much force

is in an atom; it can blow the world. Then what should be the strength of the cosmos which is full of them? And what should be the power of the Atman who is the controller of their source?

Power is not authority, and knowledge is not omniscience—they are more than that. In the Atman, the existence of one is the existence of the other. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are represented as One, and as Trinity in the Puranas. So also knowledge, power and the transcendence of individuality—symbolised as death being the condiment—are represented in the Atman. The affirmation of individuality is death. But death is not possible in Him, because in His Being all that you conceive of is transcended. To us, existence is regarded as a qualification of something. We say: "I exist" or "you exist", but in reality, existence is the substance, and is prior to 'I' or 'you'. The predicate, to make sense, is connected to the subject. But general existence is prior to particular existence, which latter is better called formation. In the case of the Atman, existence is general and absolute. This is *paramarthika-satta*. In it, individuality is ruled out, and so death has no meaning there; death is dissolved in it. "Such Atman—who can know where He really is?"

This concludes the description of the general nature of the Atman, hinting that when He is misconstrued, He may appear as *jiva* or individual, which is equated with death.

In the next section, we hear in greater detail of the individual or *jiva* in his relation to the *param*Atman.

SECTION 3 – SADHANA

How can the individual exceed himself, transcend his personality; how can man become God? This section is important for the seeker.

Section one was an introduction: Nachiketas' position. In the second, we studied the philosophy: the existence of the Supreme Being. In the third, we are going to deal with *sadhana*.

Two Selves: The Universal and Individual Soul

ṛtam pibantau sukṛtasya loke guhām praviṣṭau parame parārdhe,
chāyā-tapau brahma-vido vadanti, pañcāgnayo ye ca tri-ṇāciketāḥ. (1)

The language of this mantra is typically Vedic, and so is the style; it does not convey an intelligible meaning on the surface. The Upanishads borrow from the Vedas, especially from the spirit of the *samhita*.

We have heard of these two selves in mystical texts. In the Mundakopanishad, we also read about them: 'Two birds are in the selfsame tree'; something like that is said there. But here, they are: "Two selves, lodged in the same cave, the secret place, the chief seat of the Supreme, enjoying the fruits of meritorious deeds—these two that are hidden, are like light and shadow to the knowers of Brahman who perform the *panchagni* sacrifice, and also to the tenders of the Nachiketas fire."

You have seen the *damaru* of Lord Shiva. It is like two triangles, touching one another at their apexes, wide in their base and narrow in their waist or central point, one kept upside down. Philosophically and spiritually, this

symbol is a great mystery. *Jiva* and Shiva are both mystically united, as it were, in this combination of the two sections of the *damaru*. You can say it is like the original and its reflection in an unruffled water surface.

The figure looks upward in the reflection. Man is the opposite of God in every way. Whatever God is, man is the opposite. In the process of creation, there is a topsy-turvy action: God thinks, and the world is. But in our case, the objects *are*, and we think of them. The highest evolute in creation is *mahat*. Then comes *ahankara*; then the *tanmatras* and then, at last, the five elements. But to us, the five elements come first. And as the world affects our thinking and perception, we are slaves of it, while God is its Master. The *jiva* is enslaved by *avidya*, but *ishvara* controls *maya*. The latter is universal, the former is particularised. While there is omniscience in *maya*, there is sleep in *avidya*. *Ishvara* is *sarvajna*, All-Knowing. The *jiva* is *alpajna*, knowing little. *Ishvara* is *Sarva Shaktiman*; the *jiva* is *alpashaktiman*. *Ishvara* is *sarvantaryamin* while the *jiva* is *akadesika*. This is the Puranic symbology of the *damaru*. It is also of great significance in *tantric* lore. Heaven and earth, spirit and matter, are these inverted triangles, as also the difference between the supreme Subjectivity and objectivity.

Thus, the two contravening birds hidden in the cave of the heart, *ishvaratva* and *jivatva*, are possible in the same being. The former is markedly distinguished from the latter, even as the original from the reflection. What is the distinction? Though the outer form is the same, the reflection is without reality. The things of the world are not substantial, just like a motion picture, where many rapidly

moving pictures make a standing man on the cinema screen. He stands there due to the inability of our senses and mind to keep pace with the velocity of the pictures' movements. We are unable to catch up with the constituents of the objects, and hence we see the solid world. The Buddha is a great exponent of this non-substantiality of things. "Transient is the world," he said.

Rapid motion causes the object to look static. The world is an illusion because it is different from what it appears to be. It is a reflection and has no substantiality. It is this contrast between the original and the reflection that is brought out in this verse.

The *jivatma* and *paramatma* lodged in the same place are different like light and shade, proclaim the knowers of Brahman and those who know the five fires and the Nachiketas sacrifice, thrice performed. The two are the divine and human element in us. Our animal part is not considered here. It is taken for granted that we have risen above it. Human nature often gets contaminated by sub-human instincts. Our passions, whatever they be—intellectual, mental, sensual—are not human, but animalistic, and blur the human nature. The divine element comes into play occasionally, in times of inspiration. In its lowest form, it is conscience. In its higher one, it is spiritual; and in the highest it is the Atman. But the senses speak loudly, and so the voice of conscience gets drowned. Therefore, says the Upanishad, it cannot be known except by those who perform the *panchagni* fire: a purification of the sun, the rain, earth, man and woman. These are the five stages of manifestation, and thus the means of expression of creation.

The Buddha also compares the world to fire, the senses are fire, the eyes are fire, and so on. By fire he means desire. The whole world is a burning pit of fire.

Mystically, all objects are only formations of the five elements and can be reduced to them. When they assume the manifold forms of objects, the senses get heated up and run towards them. Even with the *panchagni* sacrifice, the five senses are still kept alive by the fivefold object elements. The method of overcoming this conflagration is another fire: the Nachiketas sacrifice, the divine *vaishvanara-agni*. When It consumes the stages of our own being—the physical, astral and causal levels—when this sacrifice is done thrice, we become a universal lustre or radiance, the same radiance that was shown by Sri Krishna to Arjuna. Thus, the universal fire is one of the two beings (divine), and the sensory is the other (human). They are the spiritual and the sensual, the universal and the individual, the divine and the human.

Though we have worldly enjoyments, we are restless. This unrest is due to the call of the divine within, the higher Being working in us always, though the lower tries to cloud our vision, on account of which we remain individuals. The higher fire is a glorious light before which the lower one is like shade.

The Nachiketas Sacrificial Fire as an Aid

yas setur ījānānām akṣaram brahma yat param,
abhayam titīrṣatām pāram nāciketaṁ śakemahi. (2)

"This universal fire of Nachiketas is like a bridge between the higher and the lower. This *vaishvanara yajna* is verily a *jnana yajna* of the soul, the way of the individual's

entry into Brahman. Fearless it is and also the means for all those who wish to cross *samsara*."

Here alone our restlessness ceases. It is called the junction between *virat* and Brahman. From multiple-consciousness, we have to go to Oneness. Whether we walk or fly, we have to pass every place on the way, though in *sadyo-mukti* the passing is so quick that you are not aware of it, like the hundred petals passed through by a needle in one moment, and yet each petal has been passed. It is a gradual ascent of the soul from the lower to the higher.

Parable of the Individual Soul in a Chariot

ātmānaṁ rathinaṁ viddhi, śarīraṁ rathameva tu:
buddhiṁ tu sāradhiṁ viddhi, manaḥ pragraham eva ca. (3)

Who is capable of performing this sacrifice? It is like the soul driving a chariot towards the supreme destination of Brahman. While It is the goal, *vaishvanara* is the bridge, the world is the location from where we have to start, and what kind of effort we have to put forth will be said in the following mantras.

We have here the symbology of a chariot, yoked to horses that are controlled by a driver, and having wheels and a road. Plato also describes this vehicle: Two horses pull it, a good one and a bad one; one moving properly, the other one is restless and impetuous. These two are the higher and lower impulses working in us.

We meet the chariot symbol quite often in the mystical literature of this world. There is a reference to it in the Bhagavadgita, too. Sometimes, the whole creation is regarded as a chariot.

In this mantra, “The soul within the chariot is the rider; the body is the chariot. The charioteer is the intellect or reason. The mind is like reigns with which the horses are connected to the chariot.”

indriyāṇi hayān āhur viṣayāṁs teṣu gocarān,
ātmendriya-mano-yuktam bhoktety āhur manīṣiṇaḥ. (4)

“The senses are the horses, the objects are the roads along which the chariot is driven; the self, associated with the body, the senses and the mind—the wise say—is the enjoyer.”

This gives us an idea how our senses are connected to objects of the world. The purpose of the chariot’s movement is to reach the destination for its rider. But the chariot is only a help, and the driver must be intelligent and know the course. The Atman, in combination with the body, the *indriyas* and *manas*, is a *karta*, doer, and *bhokta*, enjoyer. Minus the intellect, we are *karta* and *bhokta*.

The *buddhi* is carefully omitted when the enjoyer is described, because in enjoyment, the intellect is not necessary. The mind and senses work together in the lower stage, the mind merely playing second fiddle to what they say and not being independent. The independence belongs to the intellect or charioteer. Where it is lacking, *moha* is created and we go after things. When the light of the soul, bereft of intelligence, works through the mind and senses, there is *samsara*. But we have also the higher intellect which should guide us throughout. The correlation of it and the chariot is described in the next mantras.

There should not be any kind of discord between the two. The reigns should not break; the chariot should not crash. The Atman is essential, the body is essential; the

senses are essential as motive power; but only blended with the intellect they make a beautiful combination.

yas tv avijñānavān bhavaty ayuktena manasā sadā,
tasyendriyāṇy avaśyāni duṣṭāśvā iva sāratheḥ. (5)

"One who has no understanding, whose mind is unrestrained, cannot control the senses and will be like a person driving the chariot with wicked horses."

Suppose the horses of a chariot are not controlled, one horse trying to take it to the ditch or retard the progress, while the other one is good, there will be no harmony. There is always a tension in us between the higher and lower. And just as a person will not reach his destination if a horse is not good, a seeker whose intellect is clouded cannot control the senses and does not move along the right path.

yas tu vijñānavān bhavati, yuktena manasā sadā,
tasyendriyāṇi vaśyāni sadaśvā iva sāratheḥ. (6)

"But the reverse is the case of that person whose horses are good and well-trained, and when the charioteer is capable of understanding."

In this case the reigns are never let off and the movement of the chariot is proper in its course.

Intelligent Control of the Soul's Chariot Necessary

yas tv avijñānavān bhavaty amanaskas sadā'śuciḥ
na sa tat padam āpnoti saṁsāraṁ cādhigacchati. (7)

"If the driver of the chariot is bereft of understanding, his mind is ever impure, the goal is never reached and the chariot is hurled down. A person without self-control enters the womb of *samsara*."

When the senses move among objects as their road, they do not know which course to pursue. If a charioteer without intelligence comes to a crossroad, he does not know which way to choose. Or if the horses go amuck, we can imagine the fate of the chariot and its rider. The objects are many, though the elements which constitute them are only five. There is a tremendous excitement of the senses when they behold the colourful world of objects. We begin to see through them rather than the intellect, and since they are diversified, we are presented a diversified world of which we do not know what to choose. Thus, without intelligence, there is restless activity.

yas tu vijñānavān bhavati samanaskas sadā śuciḥ,
sa tu tat padam āpnoti yasmāt bhūyo na jāyate. (8)

"He whose senses are controlled and whose intellect is purified; he does not come back."

Are the roads really many, or is it one, is the question. The roads are many to the senses, but to the purified intellect it is one. The one road is *hiranyagarbha*, or *vaishvanara*, in whom everything gets melted and all roads meet. The diversified activities of the senses can stop only when the Unity behind them is beheld, which is not possible without self-withdrawal through intelligence. The five roads merge into a single one. If five horses tied to the same chariot run in different directions, what will happen to the chariot? On the other hand, if they all move in one direction—what will be their power!

vijñānasārathir yastu manaḥ pragrahavān naraḥ,
so'dhvanaḥ param āpnoti tad viṣṇoḥ paramam padam. (9)

"A person who has intelligence as the charioteer, whose mind acts as reigns, he reaches the final destination of the path, which is the supreme state of God."

The last quarter of mantra nine is borrowed from the Rig Veda. It says that the state of Vishnu is beheld by the wise ones as the state of all-pervading ether. The place of Vishnu is not a location or palace. It is spread out like ether or space, like the ocean. The river is everywhere when it reaches the ocean and does not remain localised in one place. Likewise is the soul when it reaches *vishnupada*. The Universal Being is Vishnu. The moment a *jiva* reaches his destination, he enters *vishnupada*. Therefore the body is to be utilised as a vehicle of action in the movement of the soul to God.

There is nothing wrong with our senses, mind, etc., but they should be directed properly. Evil is that which is misdirected. A thing is not evil in itself, but when it performs another's function it is evil, just as anything out of place is dirt. So everything should be in its proper place and yoked properly. The world is a training-ground in which the objects and senses are occasions for mastering our energies so that they get unified through the senses, mind and intellect. We look weak because all our energies leak out through the senses. If you conserve your health and concentrate your effort in a single channel, it is called *dharana*. This will make you powerful; this is yoga. By the control of the senses, the mind and the intellect, the soul becomes fit for God-realisation.

After this description, another aspect is being discussed. How are you to subdue the senses? How is the charioteer to control the horses? They are mad for objects! What steps

are we to take? This difficult effort on the part of the soul is called indriya-samyama or manonigraha. It is summed up in the two following slokas.

The Order of Progression to The Supreme

indriyebhyaḥ parā hy arthā, arthebhyaś ca param manaḥ,
manasaś ca parā buddhir buddher ātmā mahān paraḥ. (10)

"Beyond the senses are the objects, beyond them is the mind, beyond the mind is the intellect, beyond the intellect is the Cosmic Mind which is *hiranyagarbha*."

mahataḥ param avyaktam, avyaktāt puruṣaḥ paraḥ
puruṣān na paraṁ kiñcit: sā kāṣṭhā sā parā gatiḥ. (11)

"Beyond *hiranyagarbha*, the great Self, is *mulaprakriti*, the Unmanifest, beyond It is the *purusha*, the Spirit; and beyond the *purusha*, there is nothing."

What do we see? The world of objects. The senses see objects and move towards them. They see only the forms which are called objects and do not understand that there is something behind them. So they are running towards them, thinking that there is something in the object which they themselves lack. Looked at in this way, objects are superior to the senses. But we do not want objects; we want to enjoy their colour, taste, touch etc. Thus, a distinction has to be drawn between objects and their qualities or essence, or substance. These subtle essences, hidden in the objects, are superior to them. The senses want not the objects, but the characteristics hidden in them. The objects are not really the centre of desire. They are only a vehicle which holds the counterpart to our interest. We therefore want to utilise objects as agents for our satisfaction.

The most important of all characteristics in the world is restlessness. Whatever be the state in which we are, we are going from one change to another. This indicates that there is something seriously wrong in this world. We are like a person walking on one leg, or riding a cycle with one wheel. It can stand as long as it moves, and when it does not move, it falls. There is only 'becoming' everywhere, and there is no 'being'. Our whole life is activity, not existence. This intention to act, this process of movement throughout one's life, indicates that there is an urge of our being towards something, like the flowing of a river to the ocean. The river moves, and its movement ceases when it reaches the ocean. Not only we change; everything in the world changes: the world is transient; the world is restless; the world is in motion—it is all the same thing said in different terms. An imperfection, or lack, characterises the whole world of creation. Its motion, the velocity of objects, is what gives appearance or shape or existence to it. Things do not exist, but pass. This state of affairs is the cause of our unhappiness. We cannot find peace with ourselves because we have not achieved our end. What that end is, is the purport of mantras ten and eleven.

Beyond the drop is the stream; beyond the stream is the rivulet; beyond the rivulet is the river; and beyond the river is the ocean. There is nothing beyond the ocean. This is what these mantras say. Beyond the senses is the essence of the *tanmatras*; beyond them is the mind; beyond it is the intellect; beyond it is the *virat*; beyond It is *hiranyagarbha*; beyond It is *ishvara* or *avyakta*; beyond which is the *purusha*, and beyond the *purusha* there is nothing. The smaller tends towards the larger which is its source. The

effect moves towards its cause. That from which a thing has come attracts it, like a mother attracts her children. Planets cling to the sun because they are parts of it. All things in the world tend towards the immediately greater. There is a cause behind a cause until a causeless cause is reached, which we are in search of and which we have not yet seen.

The causeless Cause is not part of the chain of cause and effect; it is different. The ocean of the world is limited, but this Ocean is not only outside the things that flow, but also within. While the ocean is at one end of the river, this Ocean is everywhere. God calls us at all places in the world, not merely in the temples and churches. His presence is not only at one end of the world, in heaven. He is everywhere. He is the *purusha*. That is the final destination beyond which there is nothing. When you reach the *purusha*, something mysterious takes place. There is a tremendous difference between one thing reaching another thing, and the reaching of Him. No unusual occurrence can be noticed until the *purusha* is reached; there is only an ascent till then. But when you touch the last rung of the ladder, when the river enters the ocean of being, something strange takes place: it enters That which it was even before.

The end becomes the means. The causeless cause becomes everything. This transformation is supernormal; impossible to understand. It is not an achievement of the future, like the achievements of the world. Motion is possible until the *purusha* is touched. Then, the process becomes processless. This transformation is final. It is a spiritual transformation, and not a physical or mental one, a change which the preceding effects cannot know. The effect cannot know the cause until it reaches it, and when it

reaches its cause, it is no longer there. Thus, there is no such thing as knowing God. You do not know God when you are away from Him and until you reach Him, and when you reach Him, you are not there.

The senses feel far away from physical objects, on account of which they feel drawn towards them. The *panchagni* acts as incentive for the senses to move. The five elements as well as the five essences behind them act reciprocally and produce a sense of mutual attraction. The *tanmatras* pervade not only the objects, but are behind the senses also. And something happens when they unite, like a friend meeting a friend after years. It is not union of two objects, but something more, like the mother's embrace of her child. More than a mere meeting of two objects, there is a feeling which is of greater significance: a consciousness swallowing up the consciousness of particulars, and the two become one; not in the physical sense of the term; a union not even psychological merely, but more fundamental.

The essence behind sense-perception is not properly understood, and so we are caught up in *moha*; we are in a helpless condition. This condition of helplessness is *samsara*. It is a pitiable state of affairs when there is a mutual reaction between subject and object caused by a force of which no one knows. Is there no hope out of this situation? The Upanishad says that there is. It lies in a higher integration of our feeling, thinking and understanding. We should not be limited to the objects and senses, that is, we should not be reduced to the level of objects. We are friendly to them because we have reduced ourselves to their status.

The *tanmatras* are the deeper essence behind objects—including our body, which is also an object. They are not electric energy, but finer than the molecules, protons and electrons of the scientists. While electric energy is wholly inert, without intelligence to direct itself, the *tanmatras* are midway between the cosmic *prana* and the world, being the vital forces regulating the physical objects and thus superior to and higher than these and the senses. There are three *gunas* of *prakriti*; and the *sattvic* element of these constitutes the *tanmatras*, the *rajasic* element constitutes the *prana*, and the *tamasic* one the physical world. Hence, beyond the physical world, there are the *tanmatras*; and beyond them, there is the mind constituted of their subtle, sattvic principles like: *sabda*, *sparsa*, *rupa*, *rasa* and *gandha*.

Still superior in function to the mind is the intellect. While the mind functions indeterminately, there is decision and clarified understanding in *buddhi*; it makes decisions in all matters. The senses give distorted reports, the mind collects them and the intellect passes judgment. Here, we have reached the end of the human world. The highest faculty in man is the intellect. So man is said to be a rational being. But, says the Upanishad, there is something superior to the intellect. He has to rise beyond himself by a process of self-transcendence which is described in these two mantras. What is beyond the intellect? We cannot know, because knowing ceases there. The Upanishads are intuitional declarations and go further than mere knowing. Internal and transcending, but unknown to it, are the wider cosmic powers.

When we exceed the intellect, we go beyond the physical. The *jiva* goes to the *virat* when his intelligence

rises to an understanding of what is beyond it. There, human consciousness reaches a state of existence feebly felt in ecstatic moments. The Upanishad now goes to the universal Reality in its lower manifestations. *Virat* is superior to the *jiva* who is part of It, just as limbs are parts of the body. *Virat*, *hiranyagarbha* and *ishvara* are the threefold manifestations on the cosmic level—corresponding to the threefold manifestations of the individual: the waking, the dream and the deep sleep states. While we are aware of the body in waking, of the psychological condition in dream and the causal one in deep sleep, there is a lot of difference in regard to the character and function between these individual and universal states; the *virat* is not just like waking, and so on. Higher than the *virat* is the Cosmic Mind or Intellect or Ego which makes up the *hiranyagarbha* in Vedantic terminology, or Brahma, the Creator, in the Puranas.

What is beyond *virat* and *hiranyagarbha*? There is a twofold answer to this: from the point of view of the experiencing consciousness, and from the point of view of the state itself. Seen from the latter, it is *avyakta*, *mulaprakriti* or *mahamaya*; the precondition of everything. But seen from the former, the experiencing consciousness, which is *ishvara*, we may ask: 'What is in deep sleep?' The answer to this question is the answer to His character. From one point of view, there is nothing in deep sleep, and from another, there is pure consciousness. Since no phenomena take place, there is nothing; but yet there is awareness. Likewise, the awareness of existence of *prakriti* is the universal *ishvara*.

He is the cosmic Witness of all things, and there must be something even beyond Him because, even here, is duality. Transcending Him is the *purusha*. The *purusha* is not a male, It is Being. That which is cosmically existent always is the *purusha*. It is another name for the Absolute. Beyond the *mahat* is *avyakta*; beyond *avyakta* is the *purusha*. What is beyond the *purusha*? Beyond It, there is nothing. Once you reach It, you have reached the end. This is the limit of experience, and the goal of all life; not merely of life, but also of non-life. There is no such thing as dead matter. There is only difference in the degrees of life; and everything tends to This.

This description of the gradation of evolution is given in the context of self-control. Unless we take the help of the higher power, this is not possible. We try to control the senses by will-power, which is wedded to them. If it were wholly independent of them, it would work, but because reasoning is based on the report of the senses, self-control demands the use of the superior power. The intention behind the gradation stated in the mantras here is to show that we control the senses by the mind, the mind by the intellect, the intellect by the cosmic *virat*, the *virat* by the Cosmic Mind , the Cosmic Mind by the Cosmic Intellect or *ishvara*, and finally by the *purusha*.

Self-control reaches its *paragati*, or culmination, in *atmasakshatkara*, or God- realisation. It is therefore not merely a closing of the senses; it is the practical side of yoga. The whole description is one of *dhyana*, or meditation. The best way of self- control is to think of God-realisation. A mere thought of Him is enough to exert and exercise a control on the mind. When you are overpowered by a

thought of God, the senses cannot function. When you are in a holy shrine, in the presence of holy men, in an intense feeling of God, self-control automatically comes, without effort. But yoga is conscious withdrawal. A deliberate attempt is called upon by the *jiva*, and for this, a meditative process is prescribed. All yoga is meditation, finally, whatever be the technique adopted.

That the senses perceive the world, is the present fact, but you are not seeing what is behind the object, says the Upanishad. So let the senses begin to visualise what is behind the forms, internal to the objects and our own bodies. The *tanmatras* operate behind both; let the consciousness be fixed on the *tanmatras*. Meditate on the fact that the objects are not all. There is *prana-shakti* behind them and our body, without which these cannot be active; let the consciousness be fixed on this. It is not that the *prana-shakti* is all, there is the Cosmic Mind behind it; let the consciousness be fixed on That. Higher than this Cosmic Mind is the Cosmic Intellect; let the consciousness be fixed on This. Consciousness should extend itself beyond: just as I am, others also are, and just as there is consciousness within me, there is consciousness behind others. There are not many consciousnesses: there is a totality of consciousness behind everything. This Consciousness is the base; let the consciousness be fixed on it. There is, beyond all this, a potentiality for all creation, *ishvara*-Consciousness; let the consciousness be fixed on It. This is one kind of meditation.

What are objects? They are known by a consciousness; it envelops them. Because the objects are known by consciousness, it is also ultimately inherent in them.

Finally, there is only a flood of consciousness which fills all. This is *satchidananda*. This *ananda* is sufficient to exert control over our senses.

The Taittirya Upanishad given the gradation of happiness. Human happiness in a higher degree than we experience – the happiness of an emperor of the whole world, youthful, capable of enjoying everything without disease, without any limitations – is the lowest unit.

Higher than this is that of the *gandharvas*. Higher than this is that of the *pitris*, higher than this is that of the *devas*; higher than this is Indra's; higher than Indra's is Brihaspati's; higher than Brihaspati's is Prajapati's; higher than Prajapati's is Brahma's. You can meditate on this, too. There is such a reservoir of bliss. Why go to the tinsels of objects? God is Supreme Existence, is one aspect of meditation described in these mantras.

God is Supreme Knowledge, is another aspect of meditation. God is Supreme Bliss, is another one. So you can meditate on these three aspects: God as Supreme Existence, Knowledge and Bliss. This is the internal implication.

The Method of Yoga

eṣa sarveṣu bhūteṣu gūdho'tmā na prakāśate,
dṛśyate tvagryayā buddhyā sūkṣmayā sūkṣma-darśibhiḥ. (12)

"This Atman is not visible, though hidden in all beings."

With all the efforts of the mind and senses, the Atman does not reveal Himself to them because He is hidden in all things and therefore does not manifest Himself. In the earlier mantras we have been given to understand that there is a gradation of density in the manifestation of the Atman

from senses to mind, mind to intellect, and intellect to the universal denominator of all things. In all these the Atman is hidden, in every stage of being, in every object visible and conceivable. He is hidden in a peculiar way, not like a treasure hidden in the earth which can be dug out and taken. The secret lodgement of the Atman is incapable of perception due to a mysterious difficulty of ours, and it is such that we do not have time to think of it, we are so one with it that we cannot see it. We are involved in it so deeply that we are unable to detach ourselves from it and stand apart from it as a witness of the world-process.

The Atman is hidden in the senses; He is hidden in the mind; He is hidden in the intellect; and it is enough if we speak of these, though the Atman is hidden in the beyond, too. So we cannot open our eyes and see Him, and also we cannot close our eyes and see Him, because while we open our eyes, we see the objects and not the Atman, and when the eyes are closed, we see the mental process, and not the Atman. Thus, when we do the former, we are in the world of objects, and when we do the latter, we are in the psychological world. For the Atman, the psychological world is as tangible as the physical. If the senses regard the object as external to them—to the Atman, the mind is external. Who is then to behold the Atman? He is hidden behind even the subject who wants to behold. The solution to this problem does not lie in anything known to us. We ourselves are an object to the Atman, and so we cannot see Him. Such is the mysterious difficulty of *atmasakshatkara*.

The word 'Atman' has been merged into the word '*gudhah*'—this is in Vedic style. The secretly hidden Atman is not visible. No one can say he sees the Atman, because he

who sees is still outside Him. What is the process, then? This Atman is beheld mysteriously by the saints and sages.

"He is known by the subtle, sharp intellect of those subtle seers who are capable through their purified intelligence." The intelligence, or *buddhi*, is not logical intellect, or the calculative one of the ordinary individual, but verily the AtmanHimself. He is intelligence, rather than the intellect; the flame hidden in the fire rather than the fire. He is Self-illumination. The Atman as the subtlest principle reveals Himself as the Supreme Subject; never as an object. He has to be revealed within, and not imported from outside. The subtlety of the perceiving faculty should reach such an extent that even the subject should cease. In this extreme subtlety of being, we become less and less subjective and are also not objective, and thus become That which Is, or 'That-ness'. It is called '*tathata*' in the Buddhist language. It is not subjectivity, not objectivity, but something more. It is not seeing the Atman, but you become the Atman; you are He. As said in an earlier mantra: it is the Atman beholding the Atman, not the intellect, mind or senses.

A small effort will not bring the Atman. It requires the total sacrifice of your personality, not merely of family, home, etc. This is the treading: of the subtle inner path. The following mantras can be regarded as explanatory notes of mantras ten and eleven.

yacched vāṅ manasī prājñas tad yacchej jñāna-ātmani
jñānam ātmani mahati niyacchet, tad yacchec chāntav-
ātmani. (13)

Vak is speech, representing all senses. The speech has to be offered in the mind. '*Manasi*' is Vedic style. "The

intelligent seeker, the person of knowledge, should offer up the senses into the mind." This process is called *pratyahara* in Patanjali's Yoga System. It is that condition in which the senses stand together with the mind in such a way that they are indistinguishable from it. They lose their lustre in the radiance of the mind. The sun's light falls on a vessel; the former is different from the latter. Even so, when you see an object, the sense-powers get so much attuned that they may be said to be one with it. You become one with the object. They are not conscious. They are given an internal light and act as an instrument in communicating it. The mind is the source which gives adequate power to the senses for them to behold objects. The senses get attuned to their form. They are not in physical contact. It is psychological energy that pervades the object, called *vritti-vyapti*.

The mind takes the form of the object, and for the time being you are psychologically identified with the object. You become the object. This is an undesirable state of affairs, because you have become what you are not. The Atman has become the *anatman* through a *vritti*. This is sensory perception and attachment. We become not merely conscious of objects, but also attached to them in an emotional manner. So the senses have to be withdrawn into the mind. These senses are not the psychological organ. It is a mental force which channelises itself through the senses and covers the object. The mind, again, is inert, which is revealed in deep sleep. Just as the mirror is not capable of reflection without another light, so is the mind merely a conglomeration of *prakriti*. Only the *purusha* is intelligent.

So neither the mind nor the senses are wholly responsible for perception.

The enjoyer is a peculiar combination of the light of the Atman the mind and the senses, as explained in verse four of this section. The sunlight passes through a doorway, and inside the room is a mirror on which the light falls. The mirror receives and reflects the light, illumining the dark corner of the room. Even so, the Atman does not directly illumine the objects. The mind receives the Atman-light and reflects It on them. The technique of *pratyahara* starts with recognising the difference between the objects—the light reflected and the original light. The sunlight is different from the mirror light and the wall; there is only a shine seen on the wall. The light has to be withdrawn from the wall, which is to say that the senses have to be withdrawn from the objects. This cannot be done unless the mind is moved. But the mind cannot be taken away since it is not an object like a mirror, and sense-withdrawal is different from any kind of laboratory investigation. It is an internal isolation to be done.

Truly speaking, meditation starts with *pratyahara*; no *asana* or *pranayama* is necessary. The Upanishad goes straight to the psychological stage, teaching that by an act of concentration attended with intelligence, the objects are being isolated from object-knowledge, just as the light shining on the wall is different from it. Not to know this is *samsara*. For the Atman to become *anatman* is *samsara*. The affirmation, therefore, should be: "I am not the object. I cannot be the object." The mind which sees it is different from it. The senses are the five rays of the mental light, like a candle in a pot with five holes through which the rays jet out. This radiance coming out through the five holes is sensory perception, which is really mental perception. We

are different from the objects illumined by the mental rays, but the rays are not different from the light, and neither are the senses from the mind.

Now, the mind and the senses are incapable of perceiving objects because they are inert, should be the attitude of the intellect. Thus: "The mind should be offered into the intellect like the senses into the mind." The mind does not cognise objects, as we can see in sleep. It is the judgment of the intellect acting as an intermediary between the Atman and the mind, which is responsible for individual perception. The senses and the mind are wholly dependent on the intellect, it being the nearest to Reality. The intellect affirms itself, and everything depends upon it, finally. In this meditation in which the senses and the mind and intellect come together, one stage of the meditative process is achieved. It should not be mistaken for the whole of yoga, as is often done in the West. Peace of mind brought about by this stage is not yoga. It is only coming back to yourself, from the empirical point of view. This success is not final and is not *yoga-sakshatkara*. Sense-control is not over here, according to the Kathopanishad, though you may no longer have gross passions, and may be a highly cultured person.

Now, we come to a bottleneck; we cannot go beyond this stage. "He should restrain the intellect in the Great Self and That in Tranquillity." All are held up here, because the passage becomes narrow and only one person can go through. Not even your Guru can be taken. You have to go alone. Strait is the way of the Spirit. Even your body is too big and you will have to shed it. Every student of yoga fails when he comes to this point, because he has a tendency to

look upon what he has left, and his heart goes back to all of it, and this thought is enough to bring him back. This is the state of a *yoga bhrashta*. It seems that no one is fit for yoga. This leaving the body is not killing it, but transcendence. It is a spiritual activity that we are concerned with here. To leave the world and body is to be dissociated in consciousness with them, but we cannot do this. Things persist in the form of memories. This is especially true for householders, for whom it is hard to become real *yogins*. How hard it is will be told in the next mantras which are the heart of the Upanishad. If you are fortunate enough to understand them, you are blessed.

The difficulty is to turn from the particular to the Universal, which man has not seen, or understood, nor can hope to understand. While it is difficult enough to turn from the objects to the senses, from the senses to the mind and to the intellect, it is far more difficult to turn to the Universal. But this is what is needed. Here it is that we require initiation. Up to the stage of the intellect, you may practice yoga without it, but after that it gets difficult because you cannot find the next one explained in any book, nor can you find a Guru who has attained it; only a few get that far. How the individual *buddhi* can be attuned to the Cosmic Intellect is the higher yoga of the Spirit. An initiation from a proper Guru is essential; and no true initiation is possible unless your passions are subdued. The senses have to be controlled, and the mind merged in the intellect. Otherwise, it is like touching dynamite. You should not go with passion to the Guru for initiation.

You should have transcended even the intellect. *Pratyahara* is over; the individual intellect has to be

reabsorbed into the Cosmic Intellect or *mahat-tattva*. A further description is not needed here. We will know what to do when we get to this point. However, the Upanishad gives a hint: from *mahat-tattva*, which is *hiranyagarbha*, you go to *ishvara*, the *shant* Atman. While the intellect is the connection of consciousness with a particular point of view, that which is higher is the association of consciousness with all points of view. You have no point of view when you get to that stage. Instead, the points of view of all objects are yours. Instead of visualising one object, you will visualise all objects. You will say: 'All are mine', instead of saying 'this is mine'. It is the shifting of the mind from one thing, one body, one object, one point of view, to all things, all bodies, all objects, all points of view. The *buddhi* has to be transmuted in the realm of *mahat-tattva*.

Hence, yoga here is sometimes called other-worldliness. It is other-worldly in the sense that it is a science which takes the mind from the particular to the universal, and if the universal can be regarded as other-worldly, so can yoga. But the Universal is not other-worldly, because it is here and everywhere.

Exhortation and Call to the Way of Liberation from Death

uttiṣṭhata jāgrata prāpya varān nibodhata:
kṣurasya dhārā niśitā duratyayā; durgam pathas tat kavayo vadanti. (14)

My dear children, do not think it is easy! Do not sleep and try to get this Atman. "Stand up, be awake, be conscious; obtain wisdom properly by being initiated from a competent Guru—understand this. Sharp it is, and

cutting, as the edge of a razor, and hard to cross." 'Sharp' and 'cutting' are the two epithets of the sword. The edge of a sword is cutting, so sharp is it. Such is the sharpness of this yoga – so subtle that you cannot even see it. The path of the Spirit is invisible. You cannot open your eyes and see it. It is like the track of the birds in the air, or the fish in water: they are there but cannot be seen. This path of supreme wisdom is subtle in the sense that it is a balance of everything. The Spirit is balance. And no one in this world can maintain a balance. We either fall this way or that. We go to either extreme but never are in the middle. 'Balance is yoga—*samatvam yoga uchyate*.'

This is an exposition as well as guidance on the path of inward *sadhana*. The great method of meditation has been explained as the gradual self-withdrawal, not only in the realm of world-perception, but also beyond. It may look magnificent, but the Upanishad warns us of its difficulty. It may oftentimes look impossible. Hence, we are cautioned to be careful in every single day of practice. But this is extremely hard to do because, as the verse describing *karta* and *bhokta* states, our consciousness gets commingled with the mind and senses in every one of their activities. We as persons do not stand as Atman, as mind or as senses only, but all these blend and act as a focus, in which not only they, but we ourselves, become conscious of the world. We do not say 'the senses see, the eyes see, the mind sees'; we say 'I see the world'. This is so because the light of the Atman moves through the senses to the objects, as discussed earlier. Hence, the process of self- withdrawal is not merely of the senses. They are not the only culprits, and are not wholly responsible. Meditation of consciousness

demands its extrication *firstly* from objects, *then* from the senses, and *finally* from the mind and intellect.

Consciousness passes through the intellect, mind and then the senses. And in a secondary connection, we are not only attached to our body, but through it to many objects outside, and to those they are connected to. This is *samsara-chakra*, due to the original sin of consciousness getting identified with *buddhi*. So is the psychological creation of the universe, what is called *jiva-srishti*, the world of bondage, distinguished from *ishvara-srishti*. The yoga of the Upanishad is not any attempt at interfering with *ishvara-srishti*, but an honest attempt to withdraw from our own creation which has made a mess and not added a cubit to God's doing. We have created many kinds of entanglements, consciously and unconsciously, all which add to our difficulties. Our objects may vary from day to day, but the way of perception is the same throughout our life. Yoga is a system of disentanglement of consciousness from its attachments. Hence, a seeker should be a very good analyst and psychologist.

We have a false notion that the mind is inside our body, not knowing it is elsewhere. It is not always limited to the operation within. It has relations to circumstances, events and objects exterior to its own body, and hence we do not concentrate or meditate well. It may be working in a far-off land, while a part of it is in meditation. It works subconsciously also, without coming within the purview of the conscious mind. The mystery of the mind is that it can work doubly—the subconscious in object-thought, and the conscious in God-thought. The working in the

subconscious level is such that even the conscious level may not be aware of it. This makes our meditation unsuccessful.

The mind has subterranean realms. While the intellect may be connected to the conscious level, the feelings will be in the subconscious level, without connection to reason. So, yoga is a failure, and there is no joy in it. This knowledge is very essential in *pratyahara*. The process is not an ordinary psychological action. It is to be undergone with a simultaneous awareness of the internal psyche and the outer intellectual consciousness. Intellect alone cannot succeed in meditation. We have to attempt it with our total personality. It, therefore, is not the work of one of our faculties, but of our whole self as a unit of spiritual consciousness. The Atman will be revealing Himself in Himself only when the whole personality is withdrawn in all its aspects. We often believe that we are happy, not knowing the subconscious working of the mind. Man falsely thinks that he is all right.

The yoga psychology is far deeper than the usual perceptual psychology of the West, because the student is a psychologist of himself, and not of things and persons of the world. The turnings of the mind to observe itself, is the unique step taken in yoga. You begin to study yourself instead of others. This is the difference. Because you are both the student and the teacher here, the Upanishad advises you to approach men of wisdom who have insight into the truth, to obtain knowledge from them and be cautious and vigilant, because this invisible track of the bird of consciousness is subtle and cutting, like the edge of a razor. It is so even to the intellect—let alone the mind and senses.

The path of the spirit is balance, harmony; not a beaten path on which you can walk blindfolded. It is a subtle path which you alone can tread. And every individual has a path of his own. Though, broadly speaking, yoga may be one, subtly, there are as many paths as there are individuals, with difficulties different from person to person. Hence the need for a Guru who can solve your personal problems which you cannot probe into alone. Thus it is said: *prapya varan nibodhata*—know It by approaching the Great Ones.

Impregnable is this fort, inaccessible is this path; hard to tread because of the subtlety of the edge. The advancing *sadhaka* faces many difficulties. Insignificant questions, silly things, will appear large and important to hinder your advance. The subtle body will begin to operate more and more. Now we are on the physical level only. But when we become more subtle in thought, more self-controlled, more weaned from objects, the subtle body begins to work in an intense manner. Then we face disturbances of a peculiar nature. We do not know the troubles of the subtle body as long as consciousness is lodged in the physical one, but when we advance, the subtle body vibrates not only when we act physically, but also when we think and feel. Later, we begin to see it as we see the outer body and its activities now. We become so sensitive that we cannot bear any disorder.

As long as the mind is living in the gross body, it is mostly on that level connected to others. But when it withdraws itself more, it receives subtle vibrations of other subtle bodies, and it can feel and recognise circumstances on a level which is not only conscious, but far deeper. In this state, it receives vibrations from the denizens of other

worlds and laws operating in the different realms of being, the *sthani-dharmas*. In the earlier stages, it may become receptive to lower spirits; in the higher, to divine ones. You may be taken aback when these hindrances come, just as when, in *amritamanthana*, poison came, the *devas* withdrew. In the *sadhaka*, the *devas* and *asuras* also work together within to get nectar, and in this contest between the higher forces and the lower ones for a common objective—happiness—poison alone comes first from the internal practice of churning. Because like the *asuras*, the senses too want nectar, and so there is often a fall in the lower levels of the practice of yoga, when the instincts get stimulated and become passions.

Many students have fallen on account of not caring for this instruction: *prapya varan nibodhata*. The instincts get roused when we rise to the level of the *swadhisthana chakra*, according to Kundalini Yoga, and they become more active, just as after the churning, when nectar came, there was war between the gods and *asuras*. This war is mostly unknown to the seeker who has not been properly initiated, because the instruction given by the Guru is not merely into meditation, but of the difficulties on the way. He will tell you that at such and such a place there is a lion, then an elephant, then a pit, and so on, and this is known only to the preceptor who has already trodden the path. Sometimes we know what is in front of us by God's grace.

Cutting, sharp and also invisible to perception; this is the meaning of the words: *ksurasya dhara* and *kavayo vadanti*.

aśabdam asparśam arūpam avyayam tathā arasaṁ nityam agandhavac ca yat

anādy anantam mahataḥ paraṁ dhruvaṁ nicāyya tam mṛtyu-mukhāt pramucyate. (15)

My dear child, you cannot see anything there, because the Self is not an object of the senses. You cannot use the light of a torch and look.

"It is soundless, touchless, undecaying; without taste. It is formless; the presupposition of all change. Without beginning, without end, It is not anything that can be equated with the processes of time."

All these are external to the Imperishable, and while the senses can grasp objects, It is imperceptible. Objects have a limitation of their own: a body—a location, and so you can observe them. But this Reality, which is beginningless, is raised above all empirical concepts. "It is ranging beyond the intellect, not merely the individual, but also the cosmic. Only after beholding the glory of this Infinite, one can be freed from the mouth of death." We are in *mrityu-loka*, the world of death, where anything may go at any time. The next moment is not known. Can there be a more unfortunate thing than this! The soul may pass away any time and you do not know where it goes. Such is the uncertainty of this world with which we get involved, and it is most curious that our minds get attached to things which are tantalising, and that we go to the very same objects which have deceived others. Knowingly we enter the jaws of death in the form of this world. This *mrityu*, which is widespread, is everywhere—not only in one place. A person is born with his death.

The event of death is for all common perception a future one, but the cause or potential is born with us. It is only a gradual unfoldment towards the manifestation at a

particular time. As all the details of a tree are potentially present in the seed, so are the sets of circumstances born with us. In such a world of death are we. And to be free from it, we have to realise the deathless Reality which is described as the transcendence of the senses, mind and intellect, and identification with our own Self.

The Immortal Value of this Teaching

nāciketam upākhyānam mṛtyu-proktaṁ sanātanam
uktvā śrutvā ca medhāvī brahma-loka mahīyate. (16)

The first half of the Upanishad is over. Many think that, because it ends with a eulogy, the parts that follow now, were added later. "This story of Nachiketas, this knowledge of the Universal Fire of the Atman has been told to you in all detail. If a person speaks or receives this wisdom in honesty, he will reign supreme in the realm of the Creator, Brahma."

ya imam paramaṁ guhyaṁ śrāvayed brahma-saṁsadi
prayataḥ śrāddha-kāle vā tad ānantyāya kalpate,
tadānantyāya kalpate. (17)

"This Upanishad, the secret of secrets, contains the most hidden knowledge, unavailable to people on this earth. Whoso shall cause its recital in an assembly of wise mentors at the ceremony called *shraddha*, or any other form of worship, thus purifying all rituals and giving meaning to them, becomes fit for Immortality and becomes infinite in his knowledge."

CHAPTER 2

SECTION 1 – THE INTRICACIES OF THE INNER WAY OF THE SPIRIT

The nature of the path and the way of treading it have been described up to the conclusion of the first chapter. This section one of chapter two describes in more detail the intricacies of the inner way of the Spirit and proclaims that until the Supreme Reality is reached, man is not going to have any peace. All efforts in whatever direction are a failure, and all wealth and fame in all the worlds will pale away if this Supreme Being is not realised. Everything shall flee and perish without giving the least comfort if you try to acquire, possess or enjoy it without a knowledge of this Reality. The worth of all things lies in It alone.

The Self is Not to be Sought Through the Senses

parāñci khāni vyatṛṇat svayambhūs tasmāt parāṅ paśyati nāntarātman:
kaś cid dhīraḥ pratyag-ātmānam aikṣad āvṛtta-cakṣur amṛtat-vam icchan. (1)

A philosophical and psychological truth is stated in this verse, summing up human potential as well as the nature of divine Truth. "The original Creator inflicted the senses to go outwardly, so everyone looks externally. Desiring immortality, not satisfied in this world, some wise man turns within, self-controlled and heroic." We do not behold the Atman because of the original difficulty that seems to be sympathetically working everywhere; a tendency being set at work at the beginning of creation: to gaze outward. All creation is doing so. God looks at Himself in space. The

will of *ishvara* is this original gazing or *sankalpa*: the creative affirmation, a fundamental urge, though consciously initiated in the beginning; a deliberate and wilful tendency to look at Himself, to be conscious of Himself, to enjoy Himself and to do this in the form of the vast panorama of creation. This *brahma-sankalpa* to create is so powerful that it is felt in every part of the universe which is His body, just as the effect of our thinking is felt in every pore of us.

That supreme idea takes a concrete form through every part, every being. Everything is made to think in accordance with that original Ideation, though distorted. The child may imitate its father in a wrong manner.

He gazed at nothing but Himself, a *sankalpa* raving Itself for an object. While this is His original act, and while we try to imitate it, our error seems to be the 'other-ideation' in us, as against self-ideation in God. The senses of the human being, of all beings, seem to be inflicted with the punishment of looking and projecting outward. The original *sankalpa* of *ishvara* is a conscious movement of thought, while we think without having any control over it. We drift with creation, while in *ishvara*, creation drifts with His will. The *jivas* are isolated centres of thought, thinking of not only themselves, but of others in the form of objects.

In God-thought, others are not objects but subjects. We cannot understand what His thought is because we have never seen Him. In us, thoughts work in a mysterious way, independently catching hold of the impulse to create and thus making us totally unaware that there is a consciousness at all; so much so that there is only world-consciousness and no Self-consciousness, to the extent that

even the Atman is denied. The Atman denies Himself: 'I do not exist.' You as a centre of consciousness have identified yourself with the object, including your own body, so much that you see only them and are not aware of Self-consciousness. This is the deterioration of the Original Will, the mystery of God's descent into *jiva*-consciousness. This is *maya*. So we are world-conscious, body-conscious, worried because we have lost our 'be-ness' in objects; we exist as them. There is only a heap of them; the world.

But there are rare souls who have got a glimpse of what is behind it. How they have come upon this Atman in the midst of the darkness of objects, and seen light which is not otherwise seen, is a miracle. How God became this world is a mystery, and how knowledge arises in the *jiva* is a mystery too. *Dhiras*, strong desireless minds who have self-control, are the ones who have turned their gaze inward and seen their Atman, and the Upanishads are their revelations.

Consciousness drifts away in space and time; this is creation. The scriptures tell us that there have been stages of descent of consciousness. Just as a stone thrown into the middle of the still waters of a lake creates waves deep in the centre, and becomes weak in the periphery, the Original Will of *ishvara* becomes weaker and weaker as it goes through the human beings, the animal and vegetable kingdoms and becomes finally arrested of all its outgoing tendencies when it reaches inanimate matter. We, as waves produced by the momentum of *ishvara-sankalpa*, are in one of the conditions of descent. Because of this, we are compelled to go outward, not inward. If this drifting is allowed to go uncontrolled, we go to realms lower than

human. But if it is checked and allowed to know its consciousness, it may try to recede rather than proceed, and become the ripple beholding its bottom, which is the substance of all waves.

parācaḥ kāmān anuyanti bālās te mṛtyor yanti vitatasya pāśam,
atha dhīrā amṛtatvaṁ viditvā dhruvam adhruveṣv iha na prārthayante. (2)

"Children, therefore, who have no knowledge of what is happening, go after objects, and thus to destruction. This *mrityu* that is spread everywhere, into it they fall by falling into the net of objects, because when you get lost in any sense-object, you are sure to perish." The consciousness that gets attached to objects is death. When the object dies, consciousness, too, seems to die because of its identification with the former, though it never dies. All affections are of this nature. If the object with which we are identified fails, as everything has to fail, consciousness also fails and gets extinguished, and that is called death.

The struggling of consciousness to recognise itself in that object which has gone away from its clutches is the state of *preta-loka*. Literally, *preta* is 'that which is dead'. When consciousness, due to attachment, tries to catch hold of what is lost, what is in a different condition, it is in *preta*. The body is ourself, and when we have to go, when the body is destroyed, consciousness seems to go with it. It feels it is the body—and then it is the body. Pain of death is experienced by consciousness when its immediate object, the body, perishes, and also when other objects go. When you regard yourself as 'I', you refer to the body, and as time sweeps all away, it cannot exist forever. This is the law of

individuality: no part which is separated from the whole can remain so isolated always. It goes back to the whole. Thus, Yama is operating everywhere as time.

Death is a blessing, an eye-opener. Otherwise, we would remain ever bound to this body because we are so much attached to it. As long as this attachment is powerful, we take another body, though Yama snatches the present one. And so we are born and die, and we undergo *samsara* because we regard objects as ourselves, and our body as the most immediate one. Immature ones who have such attachment to tantalising objects naturally fall into the net of death. Yama is the form of the objects, and he is everywhere, as God is everywhere. From one point of view, it is *ishvara*, and from another point of view it is *kala* or Yama.

God destroys you if you don't want Him; He saves you if you want Him. When you turn away from Him, He destroys you as Rudra, and when you turn to Him, He receives you as Vishnu, calm and peaceful. When you go beyond the limitation of freedom given to you, you are punished—whether by the government, health, or God. If you overeat one day, or a few days, the stomach will tolerate it. But if you persist in this practice, you will fall sick. So is the case with God's laws. Duryodhana was given a long rope, but finally punished when the limit was reached. Life is such an integrated completeness that you cannot bifurcate it as spiritual and material. It is one. What is called material life is the turning away of consciousness and losing itself in objects. When there is Self-consciousness and you feel a dissatisfaction with the things on earth, then you are getting awakened to super-physical consciousness.

When you feel something higher, you become spiritual. Therefore, babies they are with no understanding whatsoever, who go to objects of the world, who think there is pleasure there.

The objects are nooses of Yama, and whoever goes to them is caught, like fishes get caught in a net cast out in the ocean. Die we shall, if we go near objects!—"*Dhiras*, heroes, spiritual giants, self-controlled beings who have mastered their mind and senses, feel something immortal in the objects of the world. They do not want objects, but That which is hidden behind them."

This consciousness that has been lost in objects—how are we to extricate it? To wean the mind from things, how is this difficult task performed? The next mantra gives a clue to it.

Yet the Agent in All the Senses in All Conditions

yena rūpaṁ gandhaṁ śabdān sparśāṁś ca maithunān,
etenaiva vijānāti, kim atra pariśiṣyate: etad vai tat. (3)

What is the Atman? This is the Atman: "That which is not the object that is seen, but That which sees the object." Try to differentiate between the object that is seen and That which sees. Take the example of the body: it is seen and so it is an object. Who is seeing it? I taste a dish; but who is tasting? Not the tongue, because it is also an object.

"Who perceives form, taste, smell, sounds and touches of love—that Knower is different from the known." We must be very subtle to do this great analysis. The distinction between consciousness and objects is Atman *atma-viveka*. This body is seen. Who sees? "The senses," you may say. "The mind is thinking the body." Analyse the condition of

the mind and senses again. You exist as the Seer of the body. Do you exist as the bundle of senses? No, because in the condition of dream you exist even without them. So mind can sense things even if the senses do not operate. But then, are you the mind?

No, because in deep sleep it does not function, and you exist as a centre of consciousness. In what condition do you then exist? Not as the body, not as the senses, not as the mind, not as the intellect. You cannot say that you did not exist in deep sleep. Mysteriously enough, we have a memory of it. Memory is a conscious state. You cannot remember unless you were conscious, and memory is a remembrance of a past condition. How could you have a conscious memory of an unconscious experience? How can you say consciousness proceeds from matter? Consciousness cannot emerge out of dead matter.

The conclusion is that experience can exist as mere consciousness, even without the senses, the mind and so on, and that it is different from them. "What remains after cutting off all that is not consciousness? The body is not consciousness; the senses are not consciousness. Isolate all these. What remains then? "This, verily, is That." This is another method of *neti-neti*: "I see something; I am not that something, because the Seer cannot be seen." Similarly, "I think something and I cannot be that which is thought, because the thinker cannot be thought." Again, "I understand something, and I cannot be that which I understand, because the understander cannot be the same as the understood."

This whole world is regarded as a jugglery of *maya* by the scriptures, due to this important truth found out by this

analysis. We have somehow identified consciousness with objects, and whatever value or meaning we see in things is the Atman. When you isolate the Atman from this world, the world does not exist. When the Atman is extended, He is seen as this world by the senses. When He is withdrawn, the world does not exist. Therefore, it is *maya*.

Mantras three, four and five of this section are directions in the process of self-investigation, *atmanatma-viveka*, the way in which we dive deep into our own self. Apart from the consciousness that sees objects, there is a consciousness that illumines the mind, and beyond this is Pure Consciousness. There is an essence and a form of the world. Its substantiality is due to consciousness. Objects are the combination of form and essence—the essence is the Atman, and the form is the world. If the essence is withdrawn, the form loses its substance. If you withdraw all the clay from a pot, there is no pot. The Atman is present in the world just as the clay is present in the pot. The forms which we are interested in, which we perceive, are shapes taken by consciousness in space and time due to externalisation. We do not say that the pot is the same as clay, nor can we say it is different from it.

This mysterious existence of the pot is maya. It is difficult to say what the pot is; similarly, it is difficult to say what the world is, because it has no substantiality apart from the Atman, just as there is no pot without the clay. Yet, the world appears. This analysis is for meditation on the Atman: He can be—and is to be meditated upon as—anything and everything: the Atman in the Ganges, in the sun, in every sense-object; because it is His presence that makes the appearance of the object and without Him, the

object cannot exist. The Atman can be meditated upon both inwardly and outwardly. The *drik-drisya-viveka* is a beautiful composition, attributed to Shankara: you can enter into *samadhi* by withdrawing into yourself and by projecting yourself externally. Looking at an object is, therefore, not objectionable. Only when we see it as an object of sense is it our enemy. So the Atman is your friend as well as your enemy. Minus name and form what remains in an object? Minus the name 'pot' and the shape 'pot', what is there in a pot? Even matter is the expansion of space and time, say the scientists, and their theory is not new to Indian thinkers. It was also held by the Yoga Vasishtha, which says that the whole world is nil. If you withdraw the essence, it is like a soap-bubble. It seems terrifying, but it is nothing, it has no substantiality. "This internal content of you and everything is That," says Yama to Nachiketas.

svapnāntaṁ jāgaritāntaṁ cobhau yenānupaśyati,
mahāntaṁ vibhumātmānam matvā dhīro na śocati. (4)

"That which is the perceiver of the dream and waking-life objects and that which is between both these states, that is the Atman, knowing which no one grieves." The Atman is the witness of the waking and dream life, and also that which links both in a mysterious manner. It is the same person who wakes, dreams and sleeps, and the continuity between these three states is maintained by one who is different from them. Otherwise, it would not be possible to experience continuity, or know what happened yesterday. All three experiences are the contents of one single consciousness.

The Atman is the perceiver in an unusual sense. In the same way as the clay in the pot is the perceiver of the pot—because it is its cause—so is the Atman the perceiver. If the clay in the pot were to be endowed with consciousness, what would it feel? For the clay in the pot there is no pot. It is only for the onlooker that there is a pot. The pot-consciousness is an externalised consciousness due to intervention of space and time. If this is withdrawn, there is not pot, only clay. But the difficulty is that we do not know what this withdrawal from space and time is. We can only know if we withdraw ourselves from space and time, which is not easily possible. And when we do this, we enter into a different state of consciousness.

So the Atman is non-spatial and non-temporal existence; the substratum, independent of space and time on account of which we experience the three states. The Atman as such is beyond them. He is *turiya*. There is a beautiful description of the Atman in the Mandukya Upanishad: The Atman-consciousness is not projected internally, not externally, not both ways. It is consciousness without a content, not attached to a content. What is That? It is a non-dual Substance which It alone knows. Here, It is referred to as '*mahantam*'. Once this Atman is known in realisation, there is no sorrow. All sorrow is due to entanglement of the mind in space and time. By knowing Him, one transcends.

The Universal Soul is Identical with the Individual Soul

ya imam madhvadaṁ veda ātmānaṁ jīvam antikāt,
īśāṅam bhūta-bhavyasya, na tato vijugupsate: etad vai tat. (5)

This Atman it is that makes you feel that you are the enjoyer of the fruits of action. We are under the impression that we are individual doers. *Madhu* means honey. For us, experience in this world is sweet like honey, and so we cling to it. Existence is itself joy, even with all the suffering it involves; even with all the miseries, because the Atman reflects Himself in our lives. The taster of the honey is the Atman, and the taste comes from Him, too. This joy of life does not come from a distant place. The consciousness of our being alive comes not from outside. Our life is identical with our existence.

Once you enter into the state of the Atman which is the nearest and so the dearest, you become the knower of the past and future. The very same eyes that saw the Kurukshetra Battle peep through us even today. The Purusha Sukta gives us the highest example of this fact. It says that all these eyes, all these heads, are His. Omniscience is the mark of this universal being and seeing. We shall all become like this, provided we are able to break through the wall of personality. If, instead of limiting our consciousness to a single body, we are able to go beyond it, there is immediately a flood of omniscience, if only we are able to sink into the subconscious level of our being. This going beneath can be experienced internally or externally. You can sink into the ocean near New York or Bombay; you sink into the same ocean. The Atman-ocean is everywhere, and when you once enter into Him, you will not shrink away from Him. This is so strange!

Though we try to want God, there is only a try and not the want. When God begins to look at us we are terrified, because He will not make any concession to the senses and their actions. We do not want Him to be critical about us, and so we shrink away. God's face burns like a blazing fire, and he who enters Him, does not return. But we want to return after God-realisation. See Him, and then become powerful to enjoy the objects of the world, or transform it. You do not go somewhere to see God and come back afterwards. You do not move even a single inch to see Him. You are not travelling to any place in God-consciousness; don't forget that He is everywhere.

He is omnipresent Indivisibility. Indivisibility relieves you from space and time, and because He is omnipresent, He is not somewhere, nor is He someone. You enter the same God wherever you are, and in whatever time. "He is spaceless and timeless existence. When this stage is reached, you do not turn away from anything, nor do you crave for anything. The senses are withdrawn automatically, the mind ceases to be and you do not exist as a thinker or senser, but as being—a being of omnipresent indivisibility. This is what you experience, and this is God-consciousness. It does not take time. It is not future, or past, but an Eternal Presence. This mysterious something is That, O Nachiketas!"

yaḥ pūrvaṁ tapaso jātam adbhyaḥ pūrvam ajāyata,
guhām praviśya tiṣṭhantam yo bhūtebhir vyapaśyata: etad vai tat. (6)

This *ishvara*, Brahman, God, Atman, is externally visible and internally experienced. He is far and near. Externally, to the senses, He is the most distant, and yet,

being your own Self, He is nearest. Cosmically speaking, He was even prior to the idea of creation. It was by *tapas* that *ishvara* created. But His *tapas* is different from ours. For us, *tapas* is self-control and mental effort to subdue the senses. But for Him, it is concentration of consciousness—universal being taking the shape of space and time. The substance of the world is the will of *ishvara*, just as the substance of a dream-object of yours is your own thought. Your dream-fire, your dream-water and so on are your own creations. For God, there is no hard or liquid substance, but only His will of which all elements are constituted. Prior to the manifestation of the five elements, say the Puranas, there was only universal water and the Spirit of God brooding over it. This water is the cosmic condition, and the Spirit is Narayana. He is so called because He gives life, spirit, to the original condition of things. This potentiality becomes will; Brahman becomes *ishvara*. Prior to the will of *hiranyagarbha*'s concentrated thought is the Absolute. Also, It is the deepest Reality in your own heart. That Narayana is in you even now, and He broods over creation both microcosmically and macrocosmically. He becomes the elements and the *jivas*.

In dream, you are the objects and also the subject. You yourself are the experiences of the dream-content. Likewise, *ishvara* is present objectively in the cosmos, and subjectively in you. So there need not be any worry as to how to approach this Universal Being who is far. "He who was born of old from austerity, from the waters—He is in your own heart, as the bottom of your being. By diving deep within, you can operate the whole universe. This

inaccessible Reality is the most secret Being in your own being. Nachiketas, this verily is That."

What is that which is beyond the destruction of everything, was the question. This is That. That which is far, far from the ken of our senses, yet is our being. It is the most distant, unreachable, and the most inward. This is the difficulty in God-realisation: you have to become everything or nothing. This is your *sadhana*. There are three kinds of ego: 'I am something'; 'I am everything'; 'I am nothing'. The latter two are capable of bringing liberation. But the ego 'I am something' binds.

The process of creation is being described in a graduated series: Brahman is the supreme Existence. It becomes *ishvara*, and then the will to project, *hiranyagarbha*, and as such, cosmic prana. Universal life vibrating everywhere—a gross form of which is electric energy, a part of which is our breath. Universal *prana* is *hiranyagarbha*. He is also the abode of all gods. Every God of every religion is one phase of this God. All gods hang in the universal Tree of *hiranyagarbha* like leaves, fruits, flowers hang in the same tree. This universal tree is what is described in the fifteenth chapter of the Gita. All Gods are appearances or shapes of this One God. This God, in which all gods exist, exists in your own heart. So you can see all gods of all times, anywhere, sitting in one place: Krishna, Rama, Shiva, Christ, Buddha. That which is without is also within: *Tat tvam asi*. That cosmic reality is the subjective reality also.

God is above as well as below. Cosmically, He is *ishvara* and *hiranyagarbha*. Individually, He is our own Self. We usually are under the impression that the sky is very far,

that space is above and that stars are in space. But we forget that we are in space, in the sky; hanging in mid-air. If the moon and stars are far off in the skies to us, similarly the earth is in distant space to them. Just as they seem to be hanging in space thousands of miles away, we too seem hanging in space to them. We feel we are on the earth, and space is far, far away; but the fact is that it is everywhere. It is in this indivisible, conscious space that we feel God. The ideas of below and above, of distance and nearness, and finally, the conditions we impose on space have affected us so much that even in universally existing Reality we make the distinction of below and above, and philosophically we distinguish between Brahman and *ishvara*, *ishvara* and *jiva*, macrocosm and microcosm, this and that, *tat* and *idam*—which are all notional differences.

The omnipotent Reality has centres everywhere. You can think through any point in space, for each is as good as any other. One circle has only one centre because it has only one circumference. But this is not a circle with a boundary. It may be a circle from the point of view of boundless existence, but it is filled with Selfhood and as such cannot be differentiated into good and bad, just as oneself cannot become an object. The Self is ever a subject, and inasmuch as It is the centre, It has centres everywhere. This God, Reality, which we seek, is the universal Creator, prior even to the manifestation of the five elements, *tanmatras*, and the cosmic causal condition, and yet, mysteriously enough, at the same time this most distant Being is the bottommost Existence in our heart.

yā prāṇena sambhavaty aditir devatāmayī,
guhām praviśya tiṣṭhantī, yā bhūtebhir vyajāyata: etad vai tat. (7)

"This Supreme Being is not merely the transcendent presence called Brahman, He is not merely the Supreme called *ishvara*, He is also the cosmic *prana*, the life of all beings." The life we breathe, the energy that we breathe, is all the expression of this *hiranyagarbha-prana*. It is the cosmic *prana* that is breathed, by all—by people, plants, animals etc., all move because of the *prana* that enlivens them. Life does not mean living in a world. It is not activity of any kind. To live is itself life, not merely to do something, or to speak or execute a deed. Life is the capacity to exist as different from manifested matter. It is not protoplasm; it is not thought. *Prana* and life are only different words meaning the same. And it is difficult to explain how a human being or animal differs from inanimate matter, just as it is difficult to prove that we exist. All that is connected with God is mysterious.

When you cross the logical limits of the intellect, everything becomes inexplicable. If externally there is no limit to the horizon, internally there is no limit to wisdom. Wisdom is endless as space is endless. God is limitless externally and internally. One of His expressions is this mysterious something which we call *prana*, through which living bodies move from place to place and recognise themselves. To recognise oneself as living is life. Even plants have a self-direction: they grow and move towards the light of the sun. It may not be a thinking principle, but a tendency of self-recognition which is called life or *prana*. "This cosmic life is *hiranyagarbha-prana*, in which all gods

are clustered together. This mysterious *hiranyagarbha* is in your heart also. And this Being was prior to manifestation, and It entered the beings. This verily is That."

In the earlier mantra we were told that He was prior to the manifestation of the physical elements, the *tanmatras*, to all that is conceivable. Now He is said to have entered all. The body is made up of elements, and the life in it is due to *prana* entering them. This way, *hiranyagarbha* is That reality behind all forms of life.

araṇyor nihito jāta-vedā garbha iva subhṛto garbhiṇībhiḥ:
dive diva īḍyo jāgṛvadbhir haviṣmadbhir manuṣyebhir agniḥ:
etad vai tat. (8)

"This *hiranyagarbha*, called *vaishvanara-agni* in the *aranyakas* and *nachiketas agni* here, hidden in fire-sticks like the embryo in pregnant women, should be daily adored; this verily is That." It is the *jatharagni* that digests the food in our stomach. It is the fivefold fire that functions through the five sense organs. The *nabhi* is supposed to be the centre of it; a living force. This mystical fire is hidden in the two *aranis*. In a sense you may say fire is hidden in a matchstick. In olden days it was created by the ignition of two sticks—the upper and lower *aranis* are the two sections of the *mathava* which ignites fire and keeps it hidden in them. One stick is not enough; two are necessary. *Jatavedas* is *agni*. Just as rubbing or friction is necessary to ignite fire, some sort of igniting force is necessary to manifest *hiranyagarbha*. We have Him in us; we carry Him with us always; just as pregnant women carry the foetus in their wombs wherever they go, we move about with Him, and we cannot live without Him.

This Supreme That Is within us, we worship It, though unknowingly. We cry for It, every day. We long and die for It—but unconsciously. Our searches in the world indicate that we cannot live without this Being. Our suffering, our complaints indicate that we cannot live without Him. Our wealth and possessions indicate that we cannot live without Him. *Hiranyagarbha* is the Infinite in us, and the many finitudes we collect from this world cannot make us happy. Likewise, all the visible material things collected by us cannot be equated with the Universal we are carrying. With this treasure within, we seek for It outside.

What we need is an awakening! Awakened ones recognise this Being within, and unawakened ones search for It outside. What is needed is not a possession of the treasure, but a realisation of the fact that we possess it. If an emperor dreams that he is a beggar, what are we to do to make him rich? Are we to give him riches in the dream? No—he is only to be awakened and told that he is an emperor. And the very same instruction is for us: We possess the universal treasure in us; we have enough. To become rich in the universal sense we need not acquire many things. The universal wealth must be made part of our consciousness. This is how awakened ones worship It, while unawakened ones worship It as sense objects.

The distorted worship performed by the ignorant by searching for happiness in these is not going to help them in any way; just as a beggars' wandering in the dream world is not going to help him to become rich. Awakening, and not contact with things is the way to possess universal wealth. To wake up into another consciousness is the solution. This fire of awakening has to be ignited. *Ishvara-*

sakshatkara or the awareness that one is the Universal—that conflagration which is in every matchstick—is what is necessary. This awakened Reality is verily That.

This *agni* is symbolically worshipped by the householders as the fivefold *agni*, even today, but it has become only a ritual. People mistake this earthly fire as the real, instead of recognising it as the universal fire. But the *agni* that we worship is a symbol of the *vaishvanara-agni*. Life is *prana* manifesting itself as energies of various kinds, just as electricity can be manifest as heating or freezing force, and so on.This mysterious living Being within individual bodies is That answer to Nachiketas' question about *hiranyagarbha*.

yataś codeti śuryo astam yatra ca gacchati,
taṁ devās sarve'rpitās tadu nātyeti kaś cana: etad vai tat. (9)

Yama continues: "The sun sets there, the sun rises from there; the propelling force behind the sun which makes it rise and set is that force which all the gods worship daily. No one goes beyond That. This verily is That." All gods are fixed in this one God, like spokes connected to the hub of a wheel; it can also be compared to, radii connected to the centre of a circle. This Energy is the cause of all movement, not only in this world, but even in the stellar system. This mantra is the description of the controlling Power of the physical cosmos. Gravitation is the force that acts between bodies. We are stunned by its mysterious laws working in the heavenly bodies, causing their motion through aeons and aeons. If 'A' is attracted by 'B', and 'B' is conversely attracted by 'A', we say they are mutually attracting each other. If there are three bodies involved, we cannot say which attracts what. If there are ten such bodies, the

problem is more complicated. If there are innumerable bodies, how can we explain the gravitational law? This mutual attraction among bodies, which yet keep their courses, indicates the existence of a central governing Power. Otherwise, there would be no mutual attraction and planets would run helter-skelter. There would be no centripetal force which pulls everything to the centre, keeping all in their track. The planets are seen, but not the force that keeps them moving. By the term, 'sun', we have to understand all heavenly bodies.

What is the law that keeps all cells in the body intact? Why do they not run away? We have never seen cells in the body fighting with each other. Why do they react chemically and otherwise? Why should there be a relation between effect and cause? All this is due to this central Force or Energy on which everything is hung and on which everything depends. This is the God of all gods. Everything valuable in this world and the celestial one is determined by This. No one can break Its Law. No one can exceed It. There is no such thing as violation of It. This Reality is that Supreme Being.

Failure to Comprehend the Essential Unity of Being is the Cause of Rebirth

yad eveha tad amutra yad amutra tad anviha,
mṛtyos sa mṛtyum āpnoti ya iha nāneva paśyati. (10)

"To this Universal Being there is no near and far. What is there is here, and what is here is there. Who perceives manyfoldness, goes from death to death." If you go to the Pacific Ocean, you find water everywhere—above, below,

after a hundred miles. In the Universal, everything is everywhere.

What you can see after travelling millions and millions of miles, you can see right here, and what you can see after many births, you can see now. If anyone makes any distinction in this infinite Reality, he will enter into death because of the false notion he created. Birth and death cannot be obviated as long as there is attraction and repulsion, and they cannot be avoided as long as many things are perceived. So do not be under the misconception that there are many things here. All these forms are the forms of the One thing only.

This mantra describes another aspect of the Glory of the Supreme Being. In the Supreme Absolute, there are no distinctions of any kind, as you observe among the things of the world. It is a mysterious sameness. Whatever reference we make in this world, all is defined in terms of objects that are extended in space and attributed to one another. We have differences as well as uniformities in the world, but neither of these obtains in God. The differences are of three kinds: between two dissimilar objects, *vijatiya-bheda*, as between man and animal; between one man and another man, between one tree and another tree, *sajatiya-bheda*; internal distinction, such as between one eye and another, one limb and another in the same man, *svagata-bheda*. All these are differences of some kind or another. Yet there is a uniformity in the whole body of ours on account of which we are one person and have an equal attitude towards all the limbs of our body. But the presence of God is of a different type altogether, and *ishvara*tva is defined as *sarvatmatva*, *sarvadesikatva*—Omnipresence

attended with Universal Selfhood is God's Universality of Presence. What is relevant to God cannot be said because no one has seen Him.

In the Gita, God's uniformity is mentioned: '*sarvatah panipadam tat sarvato kshishiromukham*...' In the Rig Veda, it is said: '*sahasrasirsha purushah, sahasrakshah sahasrapat*...' descriptions of God's uniformity in terms of human language. He has eyes everywhere, and also ears, legs, etc., everywhere. It is a quantitative contradiction which is not acceptable in logic. But God's eyes are everywhere, and there He has ears, too, meaning to say that in one spot in space He has eyes, ears and so on. A most strange thing! If eyes are everywhere, ears cannot be there! How can they all be present in one place? An impossibility for us! But such is His existence, at the same time pointing out that He has no eyes, etc., because He does not need them. He has no physical eyes. All our arms spread everywhere will not equal God's spreading His arms. He is not a quantitative collection of all our arms. And His perception is different from ours. If all persons look at an object, it will not be an intuition, but God's perception is intuition.

This is the difference between God's omniscience and the sensations of an individual. Human sensation is debarred from an entry into the object of perception: our ears cannot enter the sound they hear, nor can our eyes enter the objects seen. Human perception is therefore not *anubhava* in the spiritual sense. We cannot see without the help of light-rays, but God can see. Similarly, He can move without legs. While the Gita says He has eyes everywhere, the Upanishad says He has no eyes and yet He sees

everything. A single point in space, as subtle as an atom, becomes resplendent with the intelligence which is God's Substance. That resplendence of God's presence is simultaneous knowledge of all matter.

We have to open our eyes to see, and need ears to hear and a nose to smell to get the diverse knowledge of the sense objects. Our knowledge is a joint action of the five senses, and if we had more than five, it would be possible to know more facets of the same object. But *ishvara-jnana* is *anubhava*. It is *satta* of the objects. Therefore, He is called *satchidananda*: the very existence of the object is His existence. He is everywhere in the same intensity—not that God is here and not there, is now and not then. He is the same in all relations. Our relationships are different from person to person, but His is equal and the same to all. But this uniformity is not the same as that of water in the ocean which we get tired of seeing because it is a dead and monotonous sameness. This uniformity is a gorgeous variety, a tremendous richness which anyone can conceive of in any way. Such is the majestic uniformity and abundance which make the supreme existence of God.

But in this omnipresence, in this equality, in this indivisibility, our senses create a difference which leads to death. To them, something is here and something not, and due to this there is sensory activity for possession and enjoyment. Inasmuch as difference is created where it is not, because it is a false creation, the soul is bound and suffers because Truth alone triumphs, and not falsehood. So, in the Supreme Reality which is everywhere, if one is to make a false distinction, he cannot avoid death.

manasaivedam āptavyaṁ neha nānāsti kiñ cana:
mṛtyos sa mṛtyuṁ gacchati ya iha nāneva paśyati. (11)

In the Gita we are told: '*sukhamatyantikam yattad budhhirgrahyam atindriyam* ....' A similar thing is said here: "This majesty of God cannot be seen by the senses, but can be grasped by the higher, purified mind."

Reflection brought about by the *sattva guna* alone can reveal knowledge. While *tamas* prevents knowledge completely, *rajas* distracts. *Tamas* may be compared to a glass painted with coal tar, thus not allowing light to pass, as it happens to us in deep sleep. But *rajas* is like a broken or corrugated glass. It allows light, but the light is not straight. The light becomes bent or distorted; it gets projected in a diverted way. Both are not conducive to knowledge. But in *sattva*, light passes through a clarified medium which is transparent enough to give a clear picture of reality. Though reality is transcendent to the senses, *sattva* is capable of giving an idea of it. It is *rajas* that creates a distinction. "He whose senses do not see the truth, goes from death to death perpetually, due to the necessity of fulfilling unfulfilled desires, brought about by a false perception of variety."

The Eternal Lord Abiding In One's Self

aṅguṣṭha-mātraḥ puruṣo madhya ātmani tiṣṭhati:
īśāno bhūta-bhavyasya na tato vijigupsate: etad vai tat. (12)

"This Supreme Absolute, Brahman, is also the Atman of all beings. Of the size of a thumb, He resides in the middle of the body." This mysterious Existence, God, cosmically present and extra-cosmically pervading, is also in one's heart. When He enters the heart, He is the Atman, present

there in a special manner: ever a Seer and never a seen. He is *satta-samanya*; the same in all. He is the light in everything, on account of which the Atman is seen. God never becomes an object, and so no one can see Him; He sees. When He reveals Himself as the Atman, He appears to be located in that part of the body, but He is not so located. When the sun is reflected in various pots filled with water, many suns will be seen reflected in them and one may wrongly feel that there are many suns. Similarly one may be under the impression that the Atman is many. Our bodies are like a vessel containing the thought process or mind in which the Supreme reflects in a mysterious manner.

From this point of apparent localisation in the body, and on account of the secondary process of thought, the Atman is described as *angusthamatra*, or the size of a thumb. When the sun is reflected in an ounce-glass, she appears to be of that size. It is said in psychophysical science that our body is constituted of centres of nerve current, and that some are narrow and some broad, some more transparent than others. If water passes through an iron tube it will not be visible, but it will be visible in a plastic tube. Certain nerve currents in the heart, brain etc., which are known only to the mystics or yogins and not to the scientists, are very transparent, and when the intelligence within us passes through them as it does through every part of the body, there appears to be a larger intensity of light manifestation. So we are told in a figurative or special sense that intelligence is present there, because it is made visible only in these places. Intelligence is stronger felt between the eyebrows, in the throat and heart. These are the centres of the waking, dream and sleep states.

It enters the heart when we are asleep, or in death or the super-conscious state. From this point of view it is said that the size of the Atman is as a thumb.

There is a lot of controversy on this subject. Some say the Atman is only in one part of the body, and some others say that it is all over it, just like even though the candle stands in one place its light will fill the whole room. All these ideas are wrong because the Universal cannot be only somewhere; it is everywhere. It manifests as the Atman or the knowing Self and passes as a separate being on account of the limitations of the mind and senses.

When this Supreme Master of the past, present and future is known, we will not only turn away from everything, we will also not want anything of this world. "Once having beheld the majesty of God, you will want nothing of this world." Just as once you get up from dream you do not want to enter it again, likewise once having seen It you will not want to see anything of this world—like Dhritarashtra, who requested Krishna to take away his eyesight after having beheld His divine form, lest he should see anything else.

aṅguṣṭha-mātraḥ puruṣo jyotir ivādhūmakaḥ,
īśāno bhūta-bhavyasya sa evādya sa u śvaḥ: etad vai tat. (13)

"This so-called *angushthamatra purusha*, Supreme God lodged in bodies, minds, intellects, is a flame without smoke, resplendence alone, devoid of shadow." People who have beheld this Light, have given testimony in various ways. Some say it is like a flash of lightening blinding one's eyes. Some describe it as a steady golden light like that of the rising sun. Some say it is cool like that of the moon. Some say it is like a star twinkling in the space of one's

heart. Some say it is a flame without smoke. Not only the visions, but also the sounds we hear as we approach the Atman, are described in different scriptures. "This marvel is the Master of past, present and future. He is always the same, today and tomorrow." A grand immediacy of Presence and Wealth which can be described only as Omnipresence.

The descriptions of the Atman in this Upanishad are not exhaustive because not everything can be said in a textbook. All descriptions of all the scriptures put together cannot describe fully the Glory of God, such is His Infinite Might. But the word 'infinite' has been so much used that it has lost its meaning. Larger than the widest of spaces, more intensively rich than anything you have seen—all this is *ishvara*. People go mad on account of the indescribability of His Glory. Some mystics say that when He enters this body, it is like an elephant entering a thatched rut, breaking it into pieces. The body cannot bear it. It is said that Ramakrishna Paramhamsa suffered from his final illness on account of repeated God-experience. Everything in regard to God is a marvel: How to meditate on Him, how He comes, how He is, how we behold Him.

Inasmuch as we know the great Reality as It has been described, to pursue a path that is contrary to Its nature would be *adharma* or unrighteous. Unrighteousness is all activity that is directed against the nature of the Atman, primarily a forgetfulness of His supremacy within. This forgetfulness hardens into a self-affirmation of individuality, or *jiva*. This, again, materialises into love and hatred, and actions determined by these instead of by Him. When He determines our actions, we are said to perform

dharma, and when love and hate determine them, we are said to perform *adharma*. This is the secret of righteousness and unrighteousness.

The Results of Seeing Diversity or Unity

yathodakam durge vṛṣṭam parvateṣu vidhāvati,
evaṁ dharmān pṛthak paśyaṁs tān evānuvidhāvati. (14)

"Just as rain that falls on the crest of the mountain may be scattered into many streams of water rushing forth in different directions, all getting dissipated and not collected; so the energies or the intelligence of a person gets distributed and channelised in many says, exhausting him thoroughly."

Like a rivulet moving in the forest, the senses of the *jiva* direct his energies without any aim. The objects of the world are constructions of these diversified runnings of the intellect, endowed with a practical utilitarian value, *vyavaharika-satta*, but having no reality in themselves (*paramartika-satta*). Things in the world have value and meaning so long as they are related to us. Hence, they have a relative value. When the constituents change, the values change, because there is no fundamental reference to consciousness. We are living in a state of motion, just as the rushing torrents which have no being of their own, except their motion. When they do not move, they will have no existence. Man has no knowledge of what is happening to him. There is a fundamental ignorance which covers our substantiality. When the parts which make our personality return to their sources, we cease to be an individual. Because motion is mistaken for being, the world is called an illusion.

The *dharmas* mentioned in this verse are the qualities and relations that determine the world. Objects are not substances, but relations. As we found out before, they appear as solid because their velocity cannot be grasped by the mind, and so it is stupefied when it is presented with them who are the *gunas* of *prakriti*. And so, the world is indeterminable. This doctrine of *anatma-vada* is extended even to the ego; not even it is substance. A cosmic illusion of the world's substantiality is presented to all of us. The same sickness seems to afflict the whole of humanity, and therefore a common remedy is prescribed. While *mantra* fourteen tells of the sickness, mantra fifteen describes the remedy.

Our mistake is to take objects for solid, letting our consciousness getting lost in the world, just as water falling from mountain tops gets dissipated. Consciousness rushes forth in various stages and passes through various mediums—the universal consciousness getting tethered to a personal centre which is called ego, just as the sun's light gets projected through an aperture in a ceiling, looking weak and small. Not only this: it concretises and materialises concretises and materialises further and becomes the thinking mind, the energizing *prana*, the senses of cognition and action, and finally the physical body, landing itself into the world of objects, descending from the realm of the heavens. We have forgotten our grand Father, God, and are aware of this material world. This is the state of all beings when they run to objects, mistaking them for substances.

yathodakaṁ śuddhe śuddham āsiktaṁ tādṛg eva bhavati,
evaṁ muner vijānata ātmā bhavati gautama. (15)

"Just as water poured into water becomes water alone, so the self of one who has understanding becomes the Supreme." If the water falling from a mountain top were to collect and move towards the ocean, it would be one with the ocean. Likewise does the consciousness that collects itself, rather than dissipates itself, bring itself to a focus of power and joins the ocean of consciousness. When our thoughts are determined by the ocean of consciousness, we are *dhira purushas*, our actions become self-determined. When we are rooted in ego-consciousness, we become divided into bodies and objects. One who has love for a hundred people and things is like someone cut into a hundred persons. Though physically he may appear as one, psychologically he is split up, because we are what our mind is. Our personality gets dispersed, and when this goes too far, we become sick.

Everyone is sick in one way or another, because no one thinks of one thing always. If the mind and intellect did not draw their sustenance from objects but from their own source, they would be self-determined and not object-determined. At present we are determined by the objects of the world. This is not independence. Independence would be self-determined. Likewise is this process of self-collection: while *samsara* is the movement of mind in the direction of objects, *moksha* would be the opposite, the reverse of it; the collection of consciousness and merging it into Consciousness. A knowing person becomes the Atman of all. Just as many drops become water in the ocean, many thoughts collect themselves in the Atman. This is the condition of a knower, called *jivanmukti*, O Nachiketas. Thus have I explained to you what you have asked.

SECTION 2 – THE STAGES OF SELF-CONTROL

In this chapter, the Upanishad proceeds to explain the stages of self-control and the recognition of the Atman in one's day-to-day life. The various sections deal with different aspects of the same question: self-discipline and meditation are described throughout. Here, the Upanishad commences with the analysis of a particular type, pertaining to the individual body. How are we to perform self-control, *atmavinigraha*? It is nothing but a remembrance of the various functions taking place in our body, instead of forgetting them on account of a tremendous attraction to objects outside. We seem to forget ourselves. We are wise about others, but not about ourselves. We have to be wise in regard to ourselves, instead of being wise about others.

The Real Soul of the Individual and Creation

puram ekādāś-advāram ajasyāvakra-cetasaḥ,
anuṣṭhāya na śocati vimuktasca vimucyate: etad vai tat. (1)

"A city of eleven gates belongs to the uncrooked intelligence. By ruling it, one does not grieve." This body has eleven gates. What are the eleven gates of this body-city? Some say the eleven orifices in the bodily system are the two eyes, two nostrils, two ears, mouth, the two of evacuation, navel and the crown of the head. But these are gates of only the gross body. There are also eleven gates in the subtle body, the eleven senses: five *jnanendriyas*, five *karmendriyas*, and the mind.

So this city of the human personality is endowed with eleven openings, and consciousness can rush out through any of these. It can rush forth if there is even one gate; what

to say if there are eleven! It splits up and moves. But this light within is not elevenfold. It is single, and it is not channelised, just as the space in a vessel is not limited to its walls. If a violent wind blows, it is not blown out. His light is always straight, and it is never extinguished. Our body is perpetually illumined by this light within. It does not bend with the body or get destroyed when the latter disintegrates. It does not get affected with the affections of the body. Nothing on earth or in heaven can affect light. This light is *avikara aja*. One cannot restrict it as one can the things of the world. Though it illumines the eleven gates and also the things outside them, it is unaffected by what happens in the body and around it.

This bodily city is to be the object of one's self-study. He who analyses the constitution of it will not grieve any more. The physical body is made of the five elements, the gross *bhutas*: earth, water, fire, air and ether. It is the combination and permutation of them. Its constitution is the same as that of the world: the body is inert as earth is. It is endowed with light, power and motion, activity and sensation, just as a material medium may be charged with electric force. The body becomes a live wire by life-force, and is called *jiva*. The five elements do not possess this energy which may be called life. Hence, the human body is more than these elements. The vitality in us is a special thing. Not only that, we have various sensations which other living beings do not have. We establish a traffic between ourselves and the world outside through these gates of the senses. Through them, we move out of the body and go to the world, receive commodities and bring them into it. The world enters into us and we rush out; a

perpetual commerce takes place. If the gates were not there, there would be no commerce and no *jiva*. The *jiva* within lacks contents, and the world outside lacks vitality. They supply to each other what they need.

This mantra explains Kant's philosophy. We carry on this traffic with the outer world: it supplies contents, and we supply forms. This fact of mutual existence was already described in the Upanishad. The *jiva* is unhappy because he seems to lack something which the world contains, some objects that he needs. But you want meaning to be attached to them which you have to supply. So your consciousness pervades the object so much that it is mistaken for the need—like the iron ball that is charged with heat seems to be fire itself—and thus the world and the inner consciousness form *samsara*. This is the essence of our world-experience. Let one meditate on this.

Do not be a slave of this traffic; to be a witness to it, performing *anushthana* in this very birth, consciousness should visualise itself as the supreme Lifegiver of all things, for without it, they would disintegrate. When it combines itself with the elements, it becomes a *jiva*, and when it separates itself from them, it becomes liberation: the freed ones get free. "This, verily, is That."

haṁsaḥ śuciṣat, vasur antarikṣasat hotā vediṣat, atithir duroṇasat,
nṛṣat, varasat, ṛtasat, vyomasat, abjā, gojā, ṛtajā, adrijā, ṛtam bṛhat. (2)

This is a quotation from the Rig Veda and from the Yajur Veda, a description of the Atman, to be reached by *anushthana*. Inwardly He is the Self, and outwardly, He is *ishvara*. The purport of it is that the Atman is all-pervading,

omnipresent. This is *suddha satta*, the Abode of Pure Being. "He moves as air in the sky; He is the pervader of space, the priest and the guest that you see daily; He is what you call man, He is what you call woman; He is what you call law in this world; He is all-pervading ether; He is what you call water, what you call earth; He is what you call mountain. He is what you call truth par excellence. He is what is called the Great Reality; He is what you call Atman. All things, right from heaven to earth, are vitalised and pervaded by the Atman." First, we have the word '*shuchishat*', etc. He is in heaven, in earth, in air, in fire, in ether and in all the contents of the world, not only in the physical ones, but also in all the laws that operate in all qualities and relations, in everything that has significance. He is not only in the external and internal, but also in the relation that obtains between them; not only in the relation, but the as relation itself. He is the perceiver, the perceived and the process of perception, and at the same time transcends this threefold process.

In the second mantra, the Atman is described as not only the pervasive principle in all creation, but also the contents which He pervades. This will suffice to remove many misconceptions in regard to Him. That which is the Self of all beings is regarded by people as limited. They imagine the Atman to be inside the body. It is wrong to so think, because He is that which is Universal and Absolute. The ideas of inside and outside are created by the process of psychological and intellectual thinking. Hence, it would be like putting the cart before the horse if we think that the Atman is located inside the body. He is neither inside nor outside. He is the pervasive Principle and the Substance

through which He circulates. He does not pervade the universe like water pervading a cloth; He is not one thing entering another. This omnipresence of *sarvatrata* of the Atman described as pervading all things is for the purpose of explanation, inasmuch as it cannot be described in any other manner. The Atman is the Self. The Supreme Being is called the Atman because It cannot be visualised by the senses and It is prior to all concepts. Inasmuch as It is prior to everything, presupposing all activities of cognition and perception, all our faculties being external forms of It, such being Its marvellous pervasive character, it was best to call It the Atman of all things.

Again and again, the perverse mind wants the same thing it wanted before. It clings to the ideas of internal and external, and these ideas do not leave us. People look within the body or physical frame to see the Atman. He is within in a different sense altogether. Lord Jesus said: "The Kingdom of Heaven is within." How can a kingdom be within? It sounds absurd. But it is a spiritually conceived 'within' rather than the physical walled within.

It is the habit of the eyes to look within in a physical sense, and they want to see the Atman in this way alone. He is internal not only to the eyes, but also to the mind. Hence, even a psychological introversion is not enough, because the mind also introverts in space. Just as the eyes can see objects only in space and time, so is the case with the mind, too. The supreme Spirit is subtler than even the mind in the sense that He does not think as the mind thinks. To think is to separate the objects from Him.

He is within in a universal sense. If you could conceive of the universal within, that would be the Atman. He is not

internal in a spatial sense, and not external in the sense of time. He is not endless expanse in space, or passage of time endlessly projected forward. The mind is habituated to think in terms of space, time and causality, and thus we try to do the same thing with the Atman.

Even the topmost heavens are pervaded by Him, so you must bar the idea that He is within the body. He is purest uncontaminated Being, untouched by the dust of earth and heaven. He enlightens the highest heights. And downward from them is the ethereal region, also pervaded by Him. He is the cosmic principle, besides being the life- principle. He is in the five elements. He is also vitality, and all things that move on earth.

He is not merely the Pervader, but also the Material of which the universe is made, as well as its material Cause. He is its regulating laws: the physical ones, the biological ones and all the others as well, called *rita* and *satya*. The latter is law existing as the Atman, the former is the law manifested in this universe. All our laws must be in conformity with *rita*, and are meant to regulate the movement of people and bring about a balance of forces as manifestations of the supreme Harmoniser. This Atman is the largest of all Beings, and also the smallest one, pervading, as the Substance, all alike.

ūrdhvam prāṇam unnayaty apānam pratyag asyati,
madhye vāmanam āsīnaṁ viśve devā upāsate. (3)

He is not merely the cosmic principle and the regulator of cosmic activity. All activities, even in the human system, are regulated by the Atman; even our breath, He being the integrating principle in us. "He moves the *prana* up and casts out the *apana*, the ramifications of the vital force in

us, He, the dwarf seated in the middle, adored by the gods." We know from our day-to-day life how this energy pervades the whole body. Every part of it is filled with light. We are aware of every part of our system, and in order to make this body active, to give it the energy of locomotion, to make the legs move, the eyes see and the other senses do their respective work, the *pranas* fill it with *rajas*, the force of activity. The *prana* is pushed out, and the *apana* is drawn in. Thus you cannot help breathing in and out, every moment, and you have no control over your internal system which is directed by someone different altogether. We should not be under the impression that the *pranas* give us life. They are sent in different directions by the silent Being inside who is Himself not visible, like an absolute ruler who may send out his army or emissary. It is He who gets forth the *prana* on account of which all action is done: *vamana*, the silent Atman—most delightful and resplendent.

When He acts through the representatives which are the senses, desires are manifest. When He takes possession of us through any one of them exclusively, we are captured by a rapture. It may be caused by a sensory or mental activity, as in music, beautiful scenery, a masterpiece of literature. And then, you feel an elation wherein all five senses are hushed. Beauty can manifest in art or sense-enjoyment which is binding; but the highest rapture comes when in spiritual ecstasy the beauty of the Atman manifests internally; pure, non-sensory, independent of contact with mind and senses. Neither they nor the *prana* or *apana* are working then, but only that which brings illumination of the whole being.

While the senses and *prana* are activated by this silent Witness within, it is not to be forgotten that everything is subservient to Him. All gods, meaning all the senses, worship Him outwardly. He is silent. He does not act in a way we can understand. His existence is charged with a power that is enough to energise the whole universe. So the true worship of God would be to adore Him in all things, as all gods: *vishva deva*—not this or that god. He is the *prana* within and without; being inside as the senses and outside, cosmically, as the *sutratman*.

asya visraṁsamānasya śarīrasthasya dehinaḥ,
dehād vimucyamānasya kim atra pariśiṣyate: etad vai tat. (4)

"When this Being separates Himself from the body and is released, what happens to the body, and what remains in the end?" The body's beauty is that of the Atman, and when He is withdrawn, there is no beauty left. All the bodily parts are integrated by Him, and when He leaves, there is decay and decomposition, and they go back to their sources, the elements. Yama gives here a twofold answer. When the two exist together, there is what is called a personality, *jivatva*, and they seem integrated. When the two get separated, the body goes to its physical sources, and in His ultimate separation, the Atman goes to the Atman. Birth is nothing but the animation of the mind and senses by the light of the Atman, and death is separation. When it takes place, there is on one side physical death, and on the other, spiritual segregation of the connection between mind and Atman.

The mind acts as a twofold link: to the body and to Him. It can peep within as well as without. When it looks outward through the physical senses, it becomes impure, the lower mind or *asuddha-manas*. When it looks within,

independent of them, it becomes the higher mind, *suddha-manas*. That is why, though it is the cause of our bondage, it can also be the cause of our liberation.

In empirical death, the subtle body gets isolated from the physical one. Here, the contact of the Atman with the mind, does not end; only the physical body is cast off. The subtle and causal bodies remain, and they are the cause of *samsara*. The causal body is the *anandamaya kosha* into which we enter in deep sleep. As long as those two persist, transmigration for the sake of enjoying karmas cannot cease.

While empirical death is the separation from the physical sheath by the mind and the Atman, spiritual death is the separation of the Atman from the mind. When this isolation takes place ultimately, in the *atyantika pralaya*, the final death of individuality, which is *moksha*, what remains? When all that is external is left behind, what remains? All apparent restrictions of consciousness cease, and the Atman recognises His pristine, original Universality.

na prāṇena nāpānena martyo jīvati kaś cana,
itareṇa tu jīvanti, yasminn etāv upāśritau. (5)

"We do not live by *prana* or *apana*, but by something else, on which the *prana* and *apana* live." If we live on *prana* and *apana*; on what do they live? That even the gods live on the Supreme Being is illustrated in the Kenopanishad; we do not live merely by sense-activity, by mental functions, by our intellect: all these fail us one day or the other; all these live on something else. This is to be contemplated upon.

The Appropriate Embodiment of the Reincarnating Soul

hanta ta idaṁ pravakṣyāmi guhyam brahma sanātanam:
yathā ca maraṇam prāpya ātmā bhavati gautama. (6)

Nachiketas, I shall describe to you the mystery of the Atman, and where the soul goes after death." What happens to a person after death—this answer is attempted to be given in the following mantras. What happens will be determined by the condition of the present and past. It is said that a straight answer cannot be given, because what was in store even before the birth of this body must be taken into consideration.

Since many karmas are being performed—as is usually done by everyone—and since they are done under different impulses: intense, middling and mild, the intense ones create deep-seated impressions in the subconscious mind, but a mild thought produces a mild impression. Every thought is recorded; none gets lost. These impressions are determining factors of the soul's reincarnation. Strong ones may seek expression earlier than others. It is not that present ones will be taken first, necessarily; it depends on the intensity. For karmas there is no past and present. When they produce an effect called *apurva*, subtle potency, they get buried in the unconscious and subconscious levels and we do not know what is in store; very powerful ones can express themselves even in this birth, rising to the conscious level.

It is difficult to escape the nemesis of our thoughts, acts and feelings; we are answerable to them. Like our children, they will claim their due share. These karmas are obstinate, powerful and violent if they are given long ropes, and they will hurl us into *samsara* as they have done now. We

cannot say what our next birth will be like because it cannot be said now what karmas will be allotted to us. Jadabharata became a deer, Ahalya a stone and Yamalarjuna the trees. This means that human consciousness can sink to the animal, vegetable and inanimate levels under certain given conditions, but they will revert to the human one again.

When the body dies, all these collected impressions awake and rise to the conscious level, demanding their share; and this is *prarabdha* karma meaning new birth. Because we do fresh karmas then, too—as we do not remain a witness to the events—we keep adding new ones. So karmas are fresh actions done with the sense of doer and enjoyership, and mantras six and seven are some sort of reflection on this subject.

The urge for reincarnation testifies to the immortality of the soul. It never ceases its effort toward its liberation, and this effort takes the form of a series of births and deaths, outwardly manifesting the internal nature of its constitution. The soul never gets the supreme satisfaction it hopes for in this endless process of achievements. All its efforts are unfortunately directed by error, and so instead of immortality, there are only endless reincarnations. Things are connected by a perpetual bond of affinity, and emotional affections are propelled by the existence of internal unity. This internal union of things and persons manifests as loves outside. While this spiritual internal unity is the reality, it takes the form of an external attraction and pull when it manifests in the world. The ocean at the bottom is one, but if its waters are being let out through different channels, it can be split.

Human beings, all beings in the phenomenal world, are incapable of diving into this unity at the bottom. They are floating on the surface because their senses are being directed outward right from the time of creation, as mentioned in an earlier mantra; and only a few turn inward. Birth and death are correlative, and when one is there, so is the other. If you are born, you have to die; and if you die, you have to be born. So long as there is recognition of value in the things of the world, there will be love and hatred for them. And so long as there is love and hatred, desire cannot cease—it being an internal urge, and affection for things being an external movement towards the desired object. But nowhere does the spirit find satisfaction because love for objects does not in any way touch the bottom of unity. And thus, love and hatred are far removed from reality. So births and deaths do not cease, and souls enter different bodies in order to experience a set of *karmas*.

The time of death is the condition of the whole personality when there is a cessation of willpower and freedom of thought on the conscious level. You cannot think as you think now, just as what may happen in deep dream does not occur in our waking state. In the latter, by the power of will, we deliberately suppress certain thoughts and feelings, but in dream there is no such taboo or restriction, and we are free to think as we like in accordance with our deepest feelings. Thus, the last thought comes from the whole of our being. Our deeper layers of personality come to outer manifestation at the time of death. Thought is deliberate thinking, while feelings constitute the real personality of the individual.

Hushed thoughts, suppressed feelings are dangerous and one has to be careful because it is these that we carry with us at the time of death, not our relatives and wealth. The soul repents at the time of death. The Manu Smriti says: "When you depart, your parents, wife etc., will not help you. You carry with you none, nothing, except the good and bad that you have done. In the same way as you wept when you came, you will weep when you go." Thus, in an unbefriended condition the soul carries its impressions, casting off this physical body here and seeking an atmosphere where it is possible to pay for the *samskaras* and *vasanas* it carries with it. Violent *samskaras* seek expression in the nether regions. Lower and higher realms are not in space and time. The space and time necessary are created by consciousness, just as when you enter into dream, you enter a new space and time. The most enchanting story of Lila and Padma, in the Yoga Vasistha, shows how illusory space and time are, and how different space-time relations can exist simultaneously. Though it looks as if you move in them, you do not actually move. The soul's movement is relative even in this world, and so it is after death, too. Birth, death and transmigration are conditions of consciousness through which the soul passes.

yonim anye prapadyante śarīratvāya dehinaḥ,
sthāṇum anye'nusamyanti, yathā karma, yathā śrutam. (7)

"Souls which have not been liberated, enter into wombs of different species for the sake of embodiment. According to their deeds and thoughts, others enter stationary objects." We cannot say how many species there are, but the scriptures say that the soul passes through eighty-four *lakhs* of them until it becomes a human being. The soul

may enter into any species: a human body, or that of an animal or anything else, as we observed. According to the *karma*s it has performed and the remnant of force, it enters into lower or higher wombs. It may seek a body in the physical realm, or in some higher, subtler one. It may reach the realm of *svarga* or that of hell. It may follow the northern course of the sun and go to *brahma-loka*. It may follow the southern course of the sun and reach *pitri-loka*. It may attain *jivanmukti* or *sadyo-mukti*. Any of these possibilities exists. As the last thought determines the nature of the next birth, we can imagine what type of life one has to lead if a particular thought is to be engendered at the time of death. The last thought, determined by the earlier ones, may be regarded as the fruit of the tree of life.

Thus, the soul can travel through various courses, enter different wombs and species and revert again to the original status when all *karma*s are exhausted. All this happens under one condition: when our deeds are coupled with our feelings. If we think we have done something, we will have to reap the fruits thereof. This is why Karma Yoga is prescribed. Our actions should not bring about a reaction which will cause rebirth.

One's Real Self, the Same as the World-Ground

ya eṣa supteṣu jāgarti kāmam kāmam puruṣo nirmimāṇaḥ
tad eva śukraṁ tadbrahma tad evāmṛtam ucyate,
tasmin lokāḥ śritāḥ sarve, tad u nātyeti kaś cana: etad vai tat.
(8)

Here, the Upanishad shifts the emphasis to another aspect: while the soul is reincarnated in different bodies, it can also liberate itself, if it is honest. For this purpose, it has

to investigate itself deeply. Just as there is sensation behind the awareness of objects, thinking behind ordinary sensation, there is consciousness behind thoughts. This consciousness is not the same as mentation; one is not the other. Sensation is to be separated from the awareness of objects, thought from sensation, and consciousness from the thought.

Consciousness is not mind, mind is not sensation, sensation is not object. Yet due to a mix-up of character, one gets superimposed on the other. This mutual superimposition is *ananya-adhyasa*, and when we investigate it, the independence of consciousness will be realised. This is easily done by analysing the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep. In this mantra, a hint at it is given: even when you are fast asleep, you may glide into the world of dream. The various experiences you have there are similar to the waking condition. As far as their structure is concerned, these two states are the same.

Just as the consciousness that animates mentation, etc., is different from it, consciousness is different from sensation and objects both in waking and dream. And as we know, it exists even in deep sleep, because of which we remember the experiences of the previous day. This shows that consciousness stands as a witness of all states. "That which stands ultimately separated from all phenomena—physical, mental, emotional—is Brahman. That consciousness is the witness of the desire-filled activities in all the states. All worlds hang on this pure Atman in His universal nature. No one can go beyond this. Transmigration ends here. This verily is That!" says Yama to Nachiketas.

The Self is Both Immanent and Transcendent

agnir yathaiko bhuvanam praviṣṭo rūpaṁ rūpam prati-rūpo babhūva,
ekas tathā sarva-bhūtāntar-ātmā rūpaṁ rūpam prati-rūpo bahiś ca. (9)

This Atman is uniformly present; He is not different in different persons and things. It is not that He is big in an elephant, and in an ant, small. We are given three examples here: the wind, the sun and fire. Fire burns equally, without any partiality. It does things to all alike. It enters various objects and burns in various hues, putting on various contours, not on account of the difference in itself, but because of the medium through which it passes. "As fire is one in its original state, but when it enters the world puts on various forms, likewise the one Atman that is uniformly present in all bodies appears to be varied because of the differences of bodies and intellects; and at the same time, He exists outside." These things named 'men', 'animal', 'tree' are due to the Atman's intensity of manifestation. When *sattva* predominates, we call it a genius, because in *sattva* His presence is most unveiled. In the animal and vegetable kingdoms, He is revealed in a lesser degree. And when there is no manifestation of the Atman, it is *tamas*, and so we call it a stone.

All these are His embodiments. He is uniform, One and Absolute, even as fire is. Internally and externally He is the same.

vāyur yathaiko bhuvanam praviṣṭo rūpaṁ rūpam prati-rūpo babhūva,
ekas tathā sarva-bhūtāntar-ātmā rūpaṁ rūpam prati-rūpo bahiś ca. (10)

He is like the air: its odour is not really its property. We have scent at one place and smell at some other. "Just as the quality of the air does not limit it, the quality being due to the limitations of bodies such as room, vessel and so on; just as the odour that we attribute to the air does not really belong to it, so is the Atman free from any container. He is not large or small, and also exists outside." The properties of the world do not belong to the Atman. He is Existence of all beings, and being itself is His Being."

sūryo yathā sarva-lokasya cakṣur na lipyate cakṣuṣair bāhya-doṣaih,
ekas tathā sarva-bhūtāntar-ātmā na lipyate loka-duḥkena bāhyaḥ. (11)

How is the Atman unaffected? Like the sun is He unaffected. If you spit at the sun, or praise her or abuse her, it does not affect her. If there is jaundice in your eyes, it does not affect her. "Just as the sun, the eye of all the world, is not affected by external faults seen by the eyes of all people, likewise is the Atman transcendent to the world and is unaffected by it." Change, increase, decrease, decay and death are the characteristics of the world. They do not touch the Atman. Physical and ethical characteristics, characteristics of the senses and mind do not reach the Atman, because He is far, far removed from the operation of the *jiva*'s *samsara*. Without the sun we cannot live, and yet nothing that happens to us bothers her. Even so, the Lord does not take either of our good or bad. Though He is immanent, He stands transcending. Far is He, internally and externally.

eko vaśī sarva-bhūtāntar-ātmā ekam bījam bahudhā yaḥ karoti,
tam ātmastham ye'nupaśyanti dhīrās teṣaṁ sukhaṁ śasvataṁ netareṣaṁ. (12)

"The One, Controller, the inner Self of all things, single, undivided, indivisible, appears as this manifold universe, as you may appear manifold in dream. To the wise, beholding Him abiding in the soul, to them belongs real happiness, and not to anyone else." Permanent happiness belongs only to those who have realised Him in their own being, and not to those who run after objects.

Happiness and peace are the subjects of mantras twelve and thirteen. To whom does happiness belong? And who is it that can have real peace? Happiness and peace belong to those, says the Upanishad, who are able to recognise the Atman in His purity as the single Source of the multitudinous variety, as the Substance of all the forms that fill the universe. Yama is describing the unfolding of the world with its evolutionary and involutionary activities and its universal Centre which ramifies into the *nama-rupa prapancha*, the name-and-form world. Happiness is not for those who pursue this. All pleasures are created or brought about by the union of senses with objects.

We have heard of the term 'sensation', but people rarely understand what it means. Unfortunately for us, it is a stimulus evoked by the repulsion taking place when senses come into contact with objects. These experiences, falsely taken for union, can even be brought about by the mind contacting objects directly, without the help of the senses. The eyes get stirred into activity in perception, and so is the

case with the other senses. This excitation is like the morbid irritation which the body experiences during illness. But when you get used to a particular sensation it becomes normal to you, like getting accustomed to alcoholic drinks. A person used to alcohol will not feel anything if he takes a small quantity; this is the effect of habit. Habits become values, significances and realities, so much so that we become subjected to them. Instead of our controlling them, they begin to control us.

These habits and experiences, to which we are accustomed, constitute the world of forms which are regarded as realities and appear as concrete objects, like the thoughts of dream seem solid. Desires, feelings etc., concretise themselves into solidity, and we get real experiences from non-existing objects. So to have a real experience, objects are not necessary.

On the other hand, we may not experience objects, as in sleep, and death. What is necessary is sensation, impacts on our nerves—and not objects—though they may act as agents. But if we can create those sensations by an inner technique, we can have the experience also without them.

This may be seen by an example. When a mother whose son lives abroad receives news that he is dead, she will get a shock, though he may be alive. In this way, false messages may depress us, or elevate us; and at the same time, real news may not cause a sensation when they are not known. For instance, if the boy is really dead but the mother does not come to know it, she will be well. So whether or not there is a corresponding fact, sensations can create experiences.

When we touch a live wire, it repels us. We get an electric shock. This happens because we came into contact with a force having a different voltage. Likewise, our body will burn when it touches fire, because it cannot rotate with the fire's force. If it could, it would not burn.

We have living magnetism in us, and when two forces of different intensity or vibration come into contact with each other, there is repulsion, and we call it a sensation. Because we have five senses, the same object can create a fivefold sensation, and from this point of view we are in a world of things. The one form of Reality appears to be manifold.

What we want is an experience, whether or not objects exist, and the absence of it is the cause of our unhappiness. But until you become the object, or the object becomes you, there will be no oneness. One thing cannot become another thing; otherwise, there would be only one thing. So possession or enjoyment is an imagination; not a reality. The whole world is drowned in sensory happiness, but because of the fundamental defect—the impossibility of one possessing or enjoying the other—happiness does not belong to the objects, nor to the senses which are only means of conveyance of stimuli. Happiness belongs to that one Thing. Until It becomes a content of one's experience, there cannot be real joy. All sense-pleasures are sustained only by the joy emanating from that one Thing. So the senses must withdraw from all contact.

The Gita says: *ye hi samsparsaja bhoga duhkhayonaya eva te*—all pleasures that are contact-born are sources of pain. As it is false, the world will leave us one day, and so

only to whatever degree that diversity gives place to Unity, there will be true happiness.

nityo'nityānāṁ cetanaś cetanānām eko bahūnām yo vidadhāti kāmān,
tam ātmastham yenupaśyanti dhīrāḥ; teṣāṁ śāntiḥ śasvatī, netareṣāṁ. (13)

"The One eternal among the transient, the Conscious amid the conscious, the One amid many, who grants their desires; to them who perceive Him in the soul, is eternal peace." Peace cannot be had as long as you do not know the way. Silence or peace is not absence of outward noise or tumult; even if all people keep silent, there cannot be real peace, for there will be a burning within. Peace is another name for happiness. It is not a dead substance; it is vitality. It is not sleep. It is attended by consciousness; then only has it meaning. If you are a wealthy man but not aware of it, the fact has no meaning for you. It is awareness that gives meaning to life. *Maya* is nothing but the net spread out by the senses who deceive us. Under such circumstances, there cannot be peace.

Peace is the nature of the Atman , as bliss is. The more you manifest Him in your life, the more you become blissful, powerful: your face glows with radiance. Not only have you peace within, but you can also radiate it outward, like the sun. "The One eternal among the transient, the Conscious amid the conscious, the One amid many, who grants their desires; to them who perceive Him in the soul, is eternal peace." He is eternal among the so-called permanent things of the world, which are the temporarily permanent; not the eternally permanent. A building is permanent, but not eternal. While the objects of the world

can be called permanent, they are not eternal; but within them is a permanent substance, the Atman .

Intelligence is immanent in the human beings, in animals, in the vegetable kingdom. In the subtler realms, like *svarga* etc., we are in a spiritual world, not in an intellectual one, like ours. We are closer to reality there, and the senses become more and more ethereal and less and less useful, so that when we reach the highest, *brahma-loka*, we do not need the senses at all, and one mixes with the other, one mirrors the other, and so the world of senses is transcended by purified intelligence.

Even heavenly satisfactions of the world are only forms of that one supreme Satisfaction. The ocean can be diverted through various channels, and it can run through them with greater or lesser intensity, but the content of water is the same, irrespective of its force in the various outlets. So is the Atman in the same intensity in all beings. If a mirror is clean, it will reflect well. If it is painted with tar or any other colour, it will reflect accordingly. Higher forms of life reveal greater and greater manifestations of the Atman, until we come to the human level and even higher ones. When the creeper moves towards the light of the sun, it is seeking the Atman in its own blind manner. When the trees strike their roots deep inside the earth, it is for His sake. When birds fly hither and thither in search of food, when animals graze in the field, they are seeking the Atman. When we, human beings, work hard, it is not for any other reason but for that Atman which we have not yet found. We have been creeping like plants, grazing like animals; and we have not found Him—by these means He is not to be found. These variegated forms are His great drama; but

we are involved in it, and so we don't enjoy it. Enjoyment is for the spectator, not for the dramatis personae. Such is the degeneration into which consciousness has distended.

The one Experience of the Atman appears to have taken the manifold forms of this world. Suppose our different limbs became self-conscious, what would our condition be? They would fight among themselves. War taking place in one's own body is insanity. The wars in the world are only a kind of insanity, a tension between forms which are of a single Being.

'My dear ones, children of immortality, never can you find peace in this world which is torn asunder', says Yama. 'Peace is to those who recognise the one Atman as present in their own self, as the supreme Enjoyer, and not as the object of enjoyment.' 'Know the Knower, see the Seer, understand the Understander', say the Upanishads. Who is to understand the Understander? There is a strange way of knowing the Knower.

It is called *atmasakshatkara* or Self-realisation. To them who have attained belongs real peace.

tad etad iti manyante' nirdeśyam paramaṁ sukham,
kathaṁ nu tad vijānīyām kimu bhāti vibhāti vā. (14)

How are we to designate the Atman as this or that when He is in all things? Mystics have called Him 'That which Is'. "This is that; indescribable supreme Bliss is that Supreme Being." It cannot be indicated by any symbol. It is *anirdeshya*. Nachiketas wants to know: *katham nu tad vijaniyam*..."Does He shine from within or from without? Is He within or without, this wonderful Atman? Does He shine by Himself, or does He shine in reflection?" And Yama answers:

The Self-Luminous Light of the World

na tatra sūryo bhāti na candra-tārakam, nemā vidyuto bhānti, kuto'yam agniḥ;
tameva bhāntam anubhāti sarvaṁ tasya bhāsā sarvam idaṁ vibhāti. (15)

"The sun shines not there, not the moon and the stars: if millions of suns were to shine they would not be equal to That whose shining illumines every light." Which light can illumine It? We breathe because of the breath of That Breathless Being. We exist because of That Supreme Existence; all things depend on That—how could they derive vitality from anything else! In that supreme Life, this so-called sun of empirical life, this moon or mind, this fire of human desire, do not shine; all these are mockeries before the Atman. Our intellect, even that of a genius, all that we regard as the highest in us, are matchless before Him. All values are borrowed from That Supreme Value, and there remains nothing, when they are returned to It. The empirical values and realities of the world are reflections of the *paramarthika-satta*, or Eternal Reality.

These three, *pratibhasika*, *vyavaharika* and *paramarthika*, are but three expressions of the One. Just as light can pass through a clear, coloured or broken glass and get reflected accordingly, the one Reality can reveal Itself in different ways. All these manifestations: matter, body, mind; earth, water, fire, air, ether etc., are rays, varying in intensity, of the same Light from which all lights come. This is the joy which sustains us. That is the ocean of ambrosia which is not lifeless nectar of the celestials, but a conscious one. This mantra is a description of the *satchidananda* Atman.

SECTION 3 – THE TREE OF LIFE

The World-tree Rooted in Brahman

ūrdhva-mūlo’vāk-śākha eṣo’śvatthas sanātanaḥ,
tad eva śukraṁ tad brahma, tad evāmṛtam ucyate,
tasmin lokāḥ śritāḥ sarve tad u nātyeti kaś cana: etad vai tat. (1)

“This is that eternal Ashvattha Tree with roots above and branches below. That indeed is the pure. That is Brahman. That alone is the immortal. In It, all worlds are contained, and none goes beyond. This, verily, is That.” The third section, the concluding one of this Upanishad, commences with a unique comparison, the same which we find in the fifteenth chapter of the Gita. While the words of the Gita differ slightly from those of this mantra, the idea is the same: it is the description of the famous Tree of Life.

The analogy of this tree is not peculiar to our scriptures alone. The tale of this tree can also be found in the mystical texts of other cultures, though descriptions may differ slightly; but they all symbolise life.

While trees usually have their roots growing downwards, this tree has them growing upwards. Why so? Why should it be unlike other trees? There is a spiritual significance in this. Just as a tree has an origin, life has an origin. As the tree goes through the process of growth and evolution, so does life. As the tree is sustained by certain elements, life also is sustained. As the tree has many branches, life is manifold too. As the tree sprouts forth into flowers and fruits, life does similarly. As the tree is exuberant in certain seasons, so is life. As the tree can be felled, life can be cut. As the tree falls, life also ends. The

process of living can be compared to the growth of the tree. The reason why its roots strike upwards is the process of life itself.

The manifestation of the universe can be seen in two ways: it is not clear whether God created it instantaneously, by an act of Will, or whether it evolves, rising from one stage to another. The Bible says that God willed, and the universe came into existence. But the view of the scientists does not agree with this doctrine of *yugapat-srishti*; they hold that it has evolved. Vedanta accepts both theories. Even if creation is *yugapat*, this does not exclude the idea of evolution. The fact that time and space belong to creation does not necessarily suggest that it need be in space and time. In this timeless causation which is difficult for the mind to understand, the process of world evolution is super- intellectual. *Ishvara* creates in a mysterious manner, not in the logical way we think of. If His sudden Will were the cause of creation, it might be called whimsical. He would be accused of having made some people good and some bad. But, according to the Gita, God has no fancy. He takes the *karmas* of the *jivas* into consideration. Many trees grow on this earth: somewhere mango trees; somewhere thorns; various kinds in various places. The earth will bring forth whatever you sow, and sustain it, whether it is a tree with sweet fruit or a tree with bitter fruit. Likewise do the sun, the river, etc.; they shed light or give water to all in the same manner. Nature is absolutely impartial. So is God, the general Sustainer; He is supreme Impartiality, sustaining both the wicked and the virtuous. "The seeds are there," says Shankaracharaya. Seeds represent those *jivas* who have

been wound up in the previous cycle and who lie in deep sleep, as it were.

For example, we all go to sleep. A king sleeps, a beggar sleeps, a lawyer sleeps, and so on. We may say that in the state of deep sleep, we are all the same in one sense. The differences arise only when the ego sprouts. When it is hushed down in sleep, there is equality. In *brahma-loka*, the Cosmic Sleep into which all *jivas* are withdrawn at the end of a cycle, when Brahma, or *hiranyagarbha,* withdraws His personality, they do not get liberated, but lie wound up, ready for germination in the next *kalpa*. Just as sleep is not *samadhi*, the being wound up after a *kalpa* is not liberation. When Brahma wakes up into consciousness in the next cycle, the *jivas* shoot forth, and as we awake, being what we were yesterday, after our nightly sleep, so do they wake up to work out their *karmas*. The manner of working them out may vary slightly from *kalpa* to *kalpa*, but the method or pattern is the same. And so, at every *pralaya* or cyclic dissolution, the seeds of *jivas* are in the tree of life. They are there; they are not created.

Since when do they exist? This question cannot arise. Time is also a part of creation; it is from eternity to eternity. To every *kalpa* there is an earlier one, just as we cannot say whether the tree came first, or the seed.

The tree described here refers to a span of life. It has its roots above in Brahma, or *hiranyagarbha*. The Sankhya tells us that the world has evolved from *mulaprakriti*. If the seed is *prakriti*, the trunk is constituted of *mahat* and *ahamkara*. It has no branches; they shoot forth later on. It is sustained by the root of *prakriti*, the impartial light of the *purusha*. The branches ramify from the trunk. Two huge branches

shoot forth from *ahankara-tattva*. These are the macrocosm and the microcosm, the *brahmanda* and the *pindanda*, we may say; a huge and a small branch, but both are sustained by the same trunk. On one side we have the *tanmatras* which mix to form the five elements, and the *mahabhutas*. On the other side, there are the psychological organs such as the mind, intellect, etc., in the individual. Then come the ten senses, the five *pranas*, the subsidiary *pranas*, the physical body; all intimately related to the *brahmanda*, constituted of the same stuff, all organically connected to the trunk. The psychological organs, senses, etc., have their loves and hatred, the tendency to virtue and vice, all the strong and weak points of human nature; the urge to evolution and involution, for sense-gratification and God-realisation.

The sap of the tree permeates each cell. Having its branches in the form of the elements, the *mahabhutas*, the sense-organs, it spreads out and downward, right from *brahma-loka* through the seven worlds above to this gross earth and the seven worlds below. This tree is sustained by the universal *purusha* or Brahman; it is permanent in one sense, and impermanent in another one. It is *shashvata*—it cannot be destroyed. It runs from eternity to eternity. The *karma*s of the *jivas* are the ultimate cause of it, and they are endless. But it is really not constituted of any eternal element. Neither this world nor this body can be said to be permanent.

The world and body, the panorama of creation, present before our senses a picture of permanency on account of the speed with which they rotate. If our eyes could rotate with the speed of the body's electrons which form the

bricks of the world, we could see them, and there would be no world to behold. They move fast and our eyes move slow, and hence there is perception of forms. There is destruction of body cells, a change in the position of electrons, and nothing remains steady. Like the flowing water of a river: when you touch it for a second, it is not the same as you touched earlier. Likewise, when you touch an object twice, you are not touching the same object. The flame of a lamp appears to be steady, but there is constant flow and you do not see the same flame a second time.

The world is constituted of such unsteady elements, and so it is said to be *ashvatha*, that which will not last till tomorrow; and yet it appears as permanent, *shashvata*. This so-called tree of *samsara* has its roots struck in *prakriti* constituted of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, but it is ultimately made up of one substance, whatever be the variety of this vast creation. The absolutely pure Brahman is the Source of it, and also its Sustainer and Withdrawer. From This, everything starts, and into This everything returns. Many examples are given to illustrate this point. Like the spider and its web, so is creation. The web is part of the matter of the spider's body, but it appears as outside it. Or like the flashing forth of sparks of fire. This life-tree has its roots in Brahman. Even *prakriti* is in Brahman.

Ultimately, all is reducible to one substance: Consciousness. And into This, all creation gravitates. All beings are strung upon this Being. Every thing is connected to It, inseparably—even the distant stars and the high heavens. All things in all degrees of subtlety are connected to It; nothing is beyond the *purusha*, was said in an earlier verse.

“What is it that remains in the end of all things?” was Nachiketas’ question. “This is That,” is Yama’s answer.

The Great Fear

yad idaṁ kiñ ca jagat sarvam prāṇa ejati niḥsṛtam,
mahad bhayaṁ vajram udyatam, ya etad vidur amṛtās te bhavanti. (2)

All things are strung on this Being, but not in a mechanical manner. The thread has no control over the beads, though they hang on it. But here, the relation is quite different. It is one of inseparability and organic connection: without the cause, there is no effect. Some say the relation between God and the world is like between an earthen pot and the earth of which it is a form. But others feel that it does not explain the whole situation. God is not merely the material; He also fashions it. He is the effective as well as the instrumental cause simultaneously. As *ishvara*—the universal Intelligence—He becomes the efficient cause, but as *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*—as what the Sankhya calls *prakriti*—He becomes the material one; the *avarana-shakti* and *vikshepa-shakti*, as the Vedanta puts it.

His control over creation is absolute, it is not conditional. Whatever the threads do, that happens to the cloth. If the threads extend, the cloth also expands. If the threads contract, so does the cloth. Whatever the thread’s colour, that is the cloth’s also. If there is no thread, there is no cloth. The expansion of God is the expansion of the world, because His will and the object—the world—are the same. They are not different like our will and objects. He works from within, not like a carpenter who is outside the object on which he works. We cannot imagine what this

combined material, instrumental and efficient causality of God is. Nothing can shake or move or be without His Will. This supreme *hiranyagarbha*, the *sutratman*, is the ultimate Controller of this vast puppet show of the cosmos. As He manipulates through His Will, so acts the universe. He is the *mahaprana*, the cosmic breath, and nothing can exist without Him; even the direction in which a leaf moves is determined by His Will: "The whole universe—whatever exists— vibrates because it has sprung from Brahman. It is a great terror, like the poised thunderbolt. Those who know It become immortal." Great fear is God. Everything is afraid of this Supreme Will of *ishvara*. No one can go against it. Those who had the hardihood of disobeying are getting roasted in *samsara*, and yet He attracts everything back to Himself again.

The Satan of the Bible is a symbol for the original deviation of individual consciousness from *ishvara*'s will. The boons that God bestows on you, as well as the punishment He inflicts, are indescribable. The ocean of completeness, that is *ishvara-sankalpa*. It can sweep off everything, or absorb everything into Itself. It is like the *vajra* of Indra: a terror, an uplifted thunderbolt against everyone. Yet, people go against it and run after sense-objects, and thus are caught in the widespread net of death. It is compared to supreme fear because, like the parts of a machine that cannot deviate to an extra activity of their own, there is no freedom of going beyond *ishvara-sankalpa*. Freedom is not independence asserted over His Will. It is freedom to move within that. Our idea of freedom is to do whatever we like. It is not freedom, but license. The more we are away from *ishvara-sankalpa*, the more are we

bound. The nearer we are to it, the freer we become. Human freedom is only a partial manifestation of His will in us. Even our apparent freedom is allowed by *ishvara*, and because of His *sankalpa*, we exist.

The moment you know this, you become free, because to know is to be. To know the existence of God as the material, instrumental and efficient causes in one's own being is to rise at once to the state of immortality.

Thought moves things better than the limbs of the body. A powerful thought is capable of working great miracles, because of its capacity to permeate things more thoroughly than bodies coming into contact with external objects. Thus your thought, your attitude and volition have greater command. God being the greatest of these psychological forces, He can execute not merely by thought—thinking being too inadequate for Him—but by His mere being or existence, just as the sun, which moves not, can determine the movement of the orbit of other planets. Every star, every planet, every thing seems to have a prescribed way of motion. All are being controlled by a power which need not be visible. So does the whole cosmos act in all levels. This is the true meaning of the verse in the Bhagavadgita: *ishvarah sarvabhutanam hrideshe'arjuna tishthati*—God seated in all hearts works in a miraculous manner, without rest. His Existence is so interconnected with that of all else in creation that by His asserting it, all things are determined. This is what is meant by saying that fear is driven into the hearts of everything like a thunderbolt: no one can move out of the orbit of God's will.

Birth and death are only a fraction of this miraculous will, because these two ends of the chain of development

are not two distinct, unconnected elements in our life. They are means evolving to an end which need not be known to those involved. The entire process of the tree's unfolding, from the seed to a small plant, a tree, into flowers, into fruits, to a condition of withering—everything is determined by the seed's constitution. Similarly, the momentum hidden in space rockets, which is known only to the scientists, allows them the time to reach their destination, to return, etc. All this is contained in the mechanism's hidden force.

When a thing is born, it is released with a momentum for working matters out. The force latent in the sperm and ovum, before the birth of the child, is a potential form, and the length of time from its revelation upto its death is determined in it. Birth, therefore, determines death. It is not an unconnected event taking place in a life. It is an organic link of the *jiva*'s existence. Likewise, too, is the peculiar determination of things, one being connected to another, and one life not getting merely extinct, but continuing after death. We may be reborn in any realm, and such birth would be impossible if some sort of relation were not already established between the soul and the realm into which it enters. The physical and astral worlds, organic and inert bodies—everything in all realms is determined by one single Will called *ishvara-sankalpa*.

bhayād asyāgnis tapati, bhayāt tapati sūryaḥ,
bhayād indraś ca vāyuś ca, mṛtyur dhāvati pañcamaḥ. (3)

"From fear of It, fire burns, the sun shines; through fear of It, Indra, the wind and Death, the fifth, speed on their way." The shining of the sun, the pouring of rains, the blowing of the wind, the changing of seasons—all these are

determined by this single Law; and the scriptures say that no complaints should be made against rain or wind or heat, because they are divine. This illustrates that God is present in everything. He dwells in all natural processes, and we can worship Him through them. In all these manifestations, God is to be seen in the river that flows, in the sun that shines, in the trees that grow, in the birds that chirp, in the moral laws within us. Knowing this, one becomes immortal.

Degrees of Perception of the Self

iha ced aśakad boddhum prāk śarīrasya visrasaḥ,
tataḥ sargeṣu lokeṣu śarīratvāya kalpate. (4)

This is a highly controversial mantra, because the translation as it is seems to be incorrect. Shankara adds some words to give it a proper meaning, while Madhava changes the word '*sarge*' into '*svarge*'.

Literally and grammatically translated it reads: "If a person is in a position to know this before casting off his body, he becomes fit for rebirth in some world." This way, the latter part contradicts the earlier one, and because it does not make sense, Shankara says: "If one is not in a position to know... ." Max Mueller agrees in his translation. This is a possible meaning, but not suggested by the words. Other interpreters translate with: "If one has the strength to realise this truth before the shedding of this body, he becomes endowed with the power to enter into everything in the universe." This seems to be correct, because it is corroborated through a mantra of the Chhandogya Upanishad which says that if one realises God he has free access to everything and nobody can restrict him. His

freedom is unlimited like that of the gods, if only he reaches the goal before he sheds this body.

So, if we compare the three meanings; Shankara: "If one can realise this truth before he sheds this body, then, of course, he is not reborn." Madhava: "If you cannot realise this truth before the shedding of this body, you will be reborn in such realms as heaven." And lastly: "If one realises this truth before shedding this body, he becomes possessed of such power that he enters into everything." This agrees with the BrhadaranyakaUpanishad, too: "A person who knows the Truth, he knows the world and the world is his."

yathādarśe tathātmani, yathā svapne tathā pitṛ-loke,
yathāpsu parīva dadṛśe, tathā gandharva-loka chāyā-tapayor iva brahma-loke. (5)

"As in a mirror, so in the intellect; as in a dream, so in the World of the Fathers; as in water, so in the World of the *gandharvas*; and as in light and shade in the World of Brahma." This mantra illustrates the experiences of souls in the different realms of creation. What is your experience in this world? What is your experience in the world of the forefathers, in the world of the *gandharvas*, and in *brahma-loka*? They differ greatly, says the Upanishad. Here, in this world of mortals, we are not able to see the distinction between the Atman and objects, including our own body. They seem to be mingled. The latter one is superimposed on the former, and this super-imposition is brought about mutually by subject and object. You see your Self in the object, and that is why you love it.

As a face reflected in a mirror is not the original, so does the subject project its own psychic impurities onto the

object and creates a tension of love and hatred between them. One does not become the other. One cannot become the other. But the characteristics of one get transferred to the other so much that you do not know which is the subject and which the object. Thus, in our world, there is a mix-up of the Seerand the seen. This is *samsara*. You are mentally connected with so many things. This psychic connection has to be snapped. When the mirror is clean, you see the Atman. But this is not so easy, because you have become one with the object, and when you see the object instead of the Atman, there is ignorance and *aviveka*; there are *raga-dvesha*, attachment and suffering.

In *pitri-loka*, consciousness is only involved as in dream. There, the souls have a hazy notion of the Reality behind subject and object, just as when we wake up, we know that the dream selves and objects were not real. So there are occasional breaks on that level of consciousness, and an awakening into the nature of the Atman.

In the world of the *gandharvas*, the Atman is visible in the same way as our body is seen reflected through shaky water. The object and subject are not so egoistically involved with each other as to cause attraction and repulsion. Therefore, awakening is more easily possible than in other realms, the transiency of experience being indicated by the symbol of the shaky water surface. And so now and then they awaken to the consciousness of the Atman, though they are also subject to attraction and repulsion because these are present everywhere, though in higher realms to lesser degrees.

In *brahma-loka*, there is a clear-cut distinction between the divine light of the Self and the darkness of objects, just

as light is seen different from shadow, because souls stand free from sensations and desires. While there is objective experience even there, Brahma sees Himself in creation clearly, devoid of the darkness of superimpositions.

The perception of objects in this world is a play of colours. By manipulating light and shade, objects can be perceived differently. It is colour that gives perceptibility to them, and how they really are can never be seen, because the moment you put light on them, they change. Likewise, our mental light colours them according to our own psyche, and this is *jiva-srishti*. The existence of an object, light, a particular distance, a particular mental condition, senses, emotional relation—all are necessary to create a perceptional process. But in *brahma-loka*, things are as they are in themselves.

In ordinary perception, there is a mixing-up of *shabda*, *artha* and *jnana*, says Patanjali. The utterance of a name creates a sensation and produces an idea and a picture in the mind. Therefore, we do not perceive the objects as they are in themselves, but the idea we have of them. But spiritual intuition is independent of all these. In *brahma-loka*, we do not need the mind in order to perceive. The Spirit beholds in a peculiar manner which is all luminosity. There, the *anandamaya-kosha* functions, and the psychical body which we need in this world is not necessary.

There are infinite degrees of difference between subject and object. The instances described here are only a few. We can have as many types of experiences as there can be numbers of worlds. The Yoga Vasishtha goes into great details of all this. In some worlds, all material is made of gold; in others, of copper. Some are filled with trees or

reptiles. There is an infinite variety in this creation of God. The highest perception, all luminous and free of particularisation, is Brahma's. For this, we have to purify ourselves of all mental and psychic layers. We must be able to withdraw in the manner prescribed in the earlier mantras: by *pranayama*, by not getting attached to things, by standing as a witness. The process is described in mantra six.

The Gradation Up To the Cosmic Being

indriyāṇām pṛthag-bhāvam udayāstamayau ca yat,
pṛthag utpadyamānānam matvā dhīro na śocati. (6)

"The *indriyas* are different from the Self; their rise and fall belongs to them alone, thus, the wise man does not grieve." These ideas have already been expressed earlier. The instruction is that our senses should be controlled. All our difficulties are of the senses, brought about by their mischievous unintelligibility. It is like employing an untrained, devious servant. But worse even, they are impetuous, often compared to bulls, mad horses etc. In the beginning, a wild bull will rise against the one who tries to tame it. There is a series of very interesting pictures on this in Tibetan literature. The bull can be brought round by various means: sometimes with a cajolery, sometimes by a threat, etc., but there is always the danger or the threat to the life of the tamer himself. Similarly, if the *sadhaka* is not careful in his way of self-control, or if he resorts to wrong practices, there is a chance of his suffering aberration. He may even bring about his own destruction. It is thus very difficult to control the senses. They cannot be controlled by force, because they, too, have force, and force meeting force

is not a safe method. One *brahmastra* meeting another *brahmastra* brought about great destruction in the Mahabharata war.

So it is necessary to approach the senses carefully. *Sama*, *dana*, *bheda* and *danda* methods are necessary. When you act like a friend, with great understanding, you use *sama*. *Dana* is the second method. You cannot starve them forever; so you have to give them a little something at times so that they get not too bewildered, but you cannot agree with everything they want. Then there is the third method of *bheda*: the mind must be told and made to understand, 'if you control yourself, you will get the joy of Brahman', because it is foolish and it thinks it is being tormented for nothing, and so it does not go to yoga with joy. But when it is told through *svadhyaya*, *satsanga* etc., that there is a great goal awaiting it, that if it undergoes a little pain it will get a vast treasure, it will understand. Sometimes, you have to starve the mind by *vak-danda*, *mano-danda* and *kaya-danda*. The punishment of speech is not to utter any word, and the punishment of the body is not to give any food to it. The punishment of the mind is concentration, *ekagrata*, to think of one thing only. If the mind thinks of a second thing, shout that second thing loudly so that it will be prevented from going after it.

"Don't be friendly with the senses," says this mantra. "They are not your friends, and you have nothing in common. They try to run outward, while you want to go within. They tell you that there are many things, while you seek the One Thing."

The five senses give us five types of reports. These are consolidated by a single consciousness, and the knower of

them is not the senses. They are inert, they belong to *prakriti*; and *chaitanya* is of the *purusha*. The senses rise and fall at the bid of consciousness that brought them forth, and the knowledge which they try to give is not theirs. You have to bring it together. The eyes can only report colour, the ears, sound etc., and yet you seem to think that there is one unified experience. What is the secret? The secret is the intelligence, and so you should resort to that.

indriyebhyaḥ param mano manasaṣ sattvam uttamam,
sattvād adhi mahān ātmā, mahato'vyaktam uttamam. (7)

Why do you go to the senses as if they were everything? "The mind is superior to, and controls the, senses. The intelligence controls the mind; superior to the intellect is the *mahat-tattva* beyond which is *mulaprakriti*, of which *hiranyagarbha* is the manifestation. Beyond everything is the *purusha*." Why don't you go to the Supreme Being? Why to the senses which are the lowest manifestation? This *purusha* is all-pervading, and nothing is greater than He.

avyaktāt tu paraḥ puruso vyāpako'liṅga eva ca,
yaṁ jñātvā mucyate jantur amṛtatvaṁ ca gacchati. (8)

Unfortunately for us, we cannot define this *purusha*. The mind and the senses can be defined; *hiranyagarbha* and *virat* can be symbolically explained, but not the *purusha*. We cannot define anything without reference to its qualities and attributes, but He is devoid of these, and He is therefore undefinable. "He is *alinga*—but if you have the blessedness to realise Him by some means or other, *titiksha* is attained." The *purusha* without any mark cannot be meditated upon. So different Upanishads give us definitions and qualities of Him to be meditated on, like

satyam, *jnanam*, *anantam*, *vijnanam*, *tat tvam asi*, *etad vai tat*, etc. These are symbols; not definitions of God. There are various symbols, including the idols in temples. Any one will do, provided it is taken as the final one. By this, the *purusha* can be realised.

na saṁdṛśe tiṣṭhati rūpam asya, na cakṣuṣā paśyati kaścanainam,
hṛdā maṇīṣā manasābhikḷpto ya etad vidur amṛtās te bhavanti. (9)

"With open eyes this great Being cannot be seen; nobody has seen Him with his eyes. He has to be felt in the heart. Those who know Him in this manner, they become realised." He is not seen by the senses, but felt in the mind as *sattva*. The senses cannot give us this feeling; they are too dissipated. So try to meditate in the deepest recesses of your heart. This meditation is yoga.

The Method of Yoga

yadā pañcāvatiṣṭhante jñānāni manasā saha,
buddhiś ca na viceṣṭati, tām āhuḥ paramāṃ gatim. (10)

Yoga is meditation, finally, and every other technique is an accessory to it. What is meditation? It is a joint activity of the senses, mind and intellect. Three conditions are stated: "When the five senses stand together with the mind, the mind is still and the intellect is also still—which means to say that the senses, the mind and intellect should come together—that state is yoga, the highest state." A steady repose of the senses is yoga; steadfastness of the senses is yoga. This is a simple definition. It may appear to be simple, but one should be very careful here because you

may be in yoga or you may not be in yoga. You may fall if your balance is not maintained.

The five senses are to stand together with the mind and intellect, because generally they do not. The mind and senses work independently though the mind depends on them. It is like the photographic film which receives the impressions from outside. The function of the intellect is to judge. It does not directly move to the objects. It judges them through the mind in terms of the reports given by the senses. The objects are in immediate proximity to them, and remotely connected to the mind and intellect. But an experience and judgment is so rapid that all these processes take place almost simultaneously. For instance, when the eyes see a snake on the road, the report is given to the mind and at once the intellect not merely judges, but also gives orders to the *prana*, and you run away.

But in yoga these different activities are integrated, brought together for a single purpose. All five senses should be engaged in the same activity. In Patanjali's Yoga Sutra, *pratyahara* is defined as non-difference of the sense-power from the mental-power. It is like the prodigal son coming back home. In meditation or yoga, the senses who, in daily life, have never been one with the mind, come back, having realised the futility of wandering in the world. They have nothing more to do with it. You open your eyes and look because you want information from outside, but they do not want anything now. They feel they had enough and they return to their source. Thus, when they come, it is like a river entering an ocean—the mind gets flooded with all the energy you have wasted in sensation; in seeing, hearing, tasting etc. This conserved energy of *pratyahara* has a

tremendous power, and here, whatever you think takes place. If you say anything, it happens immediately.

When the senses come together with the mind, the work of the intellect is reduced. Before, it had to pass different judgments because of the variegated activities of the senses, but now it has only one judgement to pass. The whole universe stands as a single object, and if you know it, you know all objects. When the senses, mind and intellect stand together, there is a fusion of forces. This is called the union of *shakti* and *shakta*: all the powers of the mind and intellect merge into the intelligence.

More, you enter the highest form of meditation where a steady flame of consciousness is burning, self-consciousness in the universal sense. The Seerresting in himself is called *kaivalya-mukti*. When the Seer is busy shedding light on the intellect, the intellect busy in judging the report of the senses presented by the mind and when the senses are busy with the objects, it is not yoga. But when the senses have ceased from their function and return to the mind and the mind stands with the intellect, and the intellect merges itself into the Seer, it is yoga.

tām yogam iti manyante sthirām indriya-dhāraṇām
apramattas tadā bhavati, yogo hi prabhavāpyayau. (11)

"The steady control of the senses is yoga." Don't worry about the mind. Control the senses. That is yoga. But the senses are not the organs of perception. They are called *jnanendriyas*, senses of knowledge. So in every activity of sensation, there is a type of knowledge involved: the cars, trees, etc., are not the senses, and they are not to be controlled. The senses are the different types of sensation; an understanding, knowledge, consciousness or

appreciation in respect of the world outside. Looking is mere indeterminate perception, which is harmless. But seeing is appreciation of values. This is called bondage; this is *jiva-srishti*. Mere sensation in an indeterminate, general psychological sense is not what binds. Selfish concern it is that binds. Do you have such an interest in a thing? Then you should be careful.

You may see or touch an object without being attached to it, because sensation not related to emotion is different from emotional sensation. You feel a joy in touching a thing; by seeing a thing, you are either pleased or displeased. But by looking at something, if there is no such emotional reaction, you will not be bound. So tying a piece of cloth over the mouth and such other austerities is not control. If there is a steadfastness of the internal senses, it is yoga.

In short: *ishvara-drishti*, or the sight of God, is to be developed in yoga. He also sees, but the way in which He sees is different from our way. His perception is yoga and ours is *bhoga*. We are to develop God's vision towards things and not a personal attitude. I-ness and mine-ness have to be given up. Try to develop *ishvara-drishti* for one day and see what a difference it makes. When you practice it, you will see how difficult it is! Vigilance is necessary, because the senses will din on you again and again—that there are many objects, that they are desirable or undesirable, etc. So be vigilant!

You cannot be in yoga always. Be careful. "Just because you concentrated well one day does not mean that you have risen to the highest. Yoga comes and goes." Never think you are well-off in yoga. Spiritual pride is the worst thing.

No one should have the hardihood to say that he has achieved the pinnacle of yoga. Great people are always humble. Swami Sivananda used to say: “I try to be good; I do not know anything more.” Studying the life of *yogins*, we should learn to be careful on the path. Unless one becomes cautious at all times there might be a fall which will bring him to the lowest state. The repetition of mantras ten and eleven is therefore very beneficial.

The Self is Existence

naiva vācā na manasā prāptuṁ śakyo na cakṣuṣā,
astīti bruvato'nyatra kathaṁ tad upalabhyate. (12)

“What it is that you will achieve in yoga is difficult to say. Neither words nor things can explain Him. The mind cannot in its farthest imagination touch the fringe of Him. How can you speak of Him except to accept that He is what He is.” Don’t try to understand; you will know Him when you reach Him.

The concept of Reality is the subject of mantras twelve and thirteen. It has often been held that Reality cannot be conceived of; it is beyond thought. And in such ancient scriptures as the Rig Veda we have a famous negative definition of Reality in the Nasadiya Sukta: “It could not be said that there was something or that there was nothing; such was what was before the origin of the universe.” And it ends with: “Who could say what was, because who was there to say?”

The difficulty lies in it being the Absolute while all definitions are relative. No description is possible without relations, and inasmuch as the Absolute Truth is non-relational, there is nothing with which it can be compared.

It is on this account that the Mandukya Upanishad defines it as: "*nantah prajnam, na bahih prajnam*..." It is not light, not darkness, not above, not below... These are the ways in which we are lead to the *neti-neti* doctrine in the Brihadanyaka Upanishad: if you are to say something about Reality, you have to say what it is not. That the human mind is cornered in its attempt to know Truth does not solve the problem, because what one needs is not a negation of form merely, but a realisation of the Essence. Negative definitions might satisfy the logical mind, but not the aspiration of the seeking soul. The heart is pleased and the intellect convinced by a positive thing.

A peculiar urge in the human being leaves it dissatisfied in spite of the logical conclusion that only negative definitions are possible. There is no pleasure in any kind of negativity. This was observed in the Chhandogya Upanishad, where Maharishi Uddalaka says that if you negate everything, you end in a large non-being. Everything that seems to be existent has to be traced to the universal Being. So the difficulty lies in the fact that when the reason for the intellect's resort to negative definition is forgotten, only a void is reached. It is not that we seek negativity. We have been forced by a logical necessity, in order to conceive Reality, but what we get is not Reality, but a logical conclusion. This negative definition found its apotheosis in the *shunya-vada* of Buddhism, the negation of all positive values, including that of existence; swallowing everything the mind can conceive of, leaving nothing positive. Maybe this is why Uddalaka makes an affirmation: "My dear child, the original Reality should be regarded as being, and not non-being." While there is the danger of emptiness or

pessimism when postulating a negative definition of Reality, there is another danger in affirming a Being of which we have no knowledge. Even the Buddha said that to say nothing is one extreme, and to say everything is another extreme, because truth lies in the middle.

The Kathopanishad, too, takes up the concept of the Supreme Reality in practical realisation. Some psychologists and gurus believe that one should not think in meditation. This idea does not seem to be correct. I happened to have an interesting talk with some ardent followers of this dogma.

"'If you feel nothing and think nothing, what is your experience?" was my question. They said that there is no experience, because even experience is a thought which is to be set aside. This is also a negative attitude, and not a positive one of realisation. One of the tests of success in meditation is that you return from it with a sort of great satisfaction or delight. It is not that you enter a lion's den where you find nothing. Meditation is a contact with Reality, though it may be the farthest fringe of It.

So in all our discussions of truth, we should not be satisfied merely with grammatical explanations or verbal definitions, but attempt to have a practical experience.

Is Reality positive or negative, is a crucial question. If you negate everything, if you deny Brahman, then you deny yourself, because Brahman is only another name for your own Reality. But in your effort to think of Reality, what attitude are you to adopt? In mantra twelve, the Kathopanishad says that no attempt is going to succeed easily. You cannot think It with your mind. How then can you have an idea about It? You cannot see It with your eyes,

nor explain Its characteristics. Mind, speech and all senses return baffled when they attempt to know Reality.

"Nevertheless," says Yama, "finally I might say that you should regard it as 'being', because what else could be said about It?" So being seems to be the attitude recommended here. Brahman is not the negation of all things, because even if It is that, It implies the existence of something: the final remainder, pursued through the process of *neti-neti*, is Reality. The doctrine of negation also implies your own self. What then remains? Not nothing, because that which has denied or set aside everything, that which has done the act of negation remains, and thus we come to a kind of 'being', and not 'non-being'.

That is why we are advised to entertain the attitude of being, and this attitude gives comfort: the last item of existence which is identical with the bottom of our being, is Reality. That which exists is not anything which has a shape or form. They do not give satisfaction.

We have no real kinship with objects, which fact is disclosed when they desert us without notice. And so we are not finally satisfied with anything in the world, though tentatively we shake hands with them. That which is in real kinship with us, becomes us. The spirit cries for a supreme satisfaction. All beings run after that Being of being: *satyasya-satyam*. We all rush towards It, running in all directions, seeking It and asking for It from everything that comes across. But all give us a negative reply; no one can help us as no one has seen It.

All our searching in objects for this Reality is only an experimentation; and the answer is always negative because It is not there—outside you—in objects. You carry It with

you always. It is the greatest negation, objectively; but subjectively, It is the Supreme Being or Absolute Existence which is the negation of everything external, of everything outside Brahman. So *astitva* or be-ness is the final resort of consciousness, and this is what consciousness realises in meditation. *Chit* becomes *sat*—this is the essence. As water enters water, or milk gets poured into milk, consciousness mixes with being in highest meditation. Hence it is not existence of this or that object, but even of the relations that exist between them. This is the positive advice in this Upanishad: "Hold onto being in meditation!"

astīty evopalabdhavyas tattva-bhāvena cobhayoḥ,
astīty evopalabdhasya tattva-bhāvaḥ prasīdati. (13)

"He should be realised as existent, and then in His transcendental nature. When He is apprehended as existent, His real nature becomes clear."

Mantras twelve and thirteen are difficult to understand. If you must choose between being and non-being, it is better to hold onto being, because if we persist on that thought, Truth will reveal itself. This hints at the highest Upanishadic meditation which to achieve all study is done. How you are to meditate on Reality is here defined.

Being is Reality; *sat* is the same as *chit*. The *sat* or being which we are to meditate upon is not of objects. It is the great being which sets aside all externality. It is general existence, including your existence. It is not someone meditating on something else. It is not you meditating on God. You become a part of that on which you meditate, because you are part of the general existence. It is difficult to explain what it is, but it becomes easy in actual practice. Thus this all-inclusive meditation is *jnana-marga*, where

you are face to face with God immediately. Here, you do not meditate on forms, because your form is merged in God—you meditate on Existence.

Requires Sincere Renunciation of All Desires and Attachments

yadā sarve pramucyante kāmā ye'sya hṛdi śritāḥ,
atha martyo'mṛto bhavatyatra brahma samaśnute. (14)

Again a warning: if you have unfulfilled desires in your heart, you cannot succeed in meditation. "When all desires from the heart are cast aside, you enter Brahman here itself; the mortal becomes immortal."

Our difficulties and problems are self-made, caused by desires. We intellectually crave for Reality; emotionally, we crave for the world. This predicament is beautifully depicted in this mantra. It is no use saying "I have no desires," because they are not merely in the conscious level of the mind. They are also buried in the subconscious. In your dreams you can sometimes see what desires you have. When you are in a good position socially and economically, everything appears to be fine, and you seem to be desireless. But when you are thrown to the winds, when everything goes dead wrong with you and when you feel like dying, the truth comes up. These deep-lurking desires have to be cast out. Then we can meditate as mentioned here, and then we will get Brahman. Here itself Brahman is attained, and the mortal becomes immortal when all desires are cast out.

yadā sarve prabhidyante hṛdayasyeha granthayaḥ,
atha martyo'mṛto bhavaty etāvad anuśāsanam. (15)

Here, the teaching is concluded. This is the instruction:

"When the knots of the heart are broken asunder, the mortal becomes immortal. This is the teaching." The knots of the heart are *avidya*, *kama* and *karma*. The ignorance which screens ourselves from Reality is *avidya*; the desire that arises for objects on account of *avidya* is *kama*; and the daily activities due to *kama* are *karma*, by which we are tied down to mortal existence. When these are rent asunder, the mortal becomes immortal. There is nothing more to say.

The Upanishadic teaching concludes with this mantra. The knots of the heart are those centres of bondage which limit consciousness to the body and earthly existence because they limit it and its sphere of activity. While consciousness is infinite, they bind it to finitude.

These knots are identified with certain psychic centres called *chakras*, which special mention is made of *brahma-granthi*, *rudra-granthi* and *vishnu-granthi*. Philosophically and mystically speaking, they refer to *avidya*, *kama* and *karma*. Consciousness is tied with a threefold knot, thus being firmly fastened to world- perception rather than God-consciousness. To pierce these three is the real *tripura- samhara*, the feat which Lord Shiva accomplished. Nobody but He could destroy these three *asuras*. Likewise, we have these three knots and not any weapon will be of any avail in destroying them. They are supposed to be made of gold, silver and iron—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. They are our internal structure and psychic problems by which we are made finite. Just as Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva had to concentrate their efforts to destroy the three *asuras*, a tremendous effort is necessary to pierce them. The three are inseparable from one another. They work together jointly, like the creating, preserving and transforming powers of

Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva; Sarasvati, Lakshmi and Durga have to work together. These knots cannot be manipulated. Most people do not even know that they exist. We cannot visualise them; they are so near to us. They cannot be separated from our normal consciousness and distorted; just as when we see through spectacles, we see objects but not the spectacles themselves.

Oblivion of God, desire to acquire things and consequent action all take place simultaneously. Extraordinary precautions have to be taken by seekers who undertake to destroy them; ordinary intelligence is of no avail.

It is at this point that people realise that the difficulty is within rather than outside. Most find fault with external circumstances, saying that the world is wretched and things and circumstances are not conducive. They feel that there is nothing wrong inside. But a complete turning of the table is necessary. Things are all right! Only, something is wrong with us; inside us. Our difficulties are personal, psychological and purely individual. Strictly speaking, we are a bundle of ignorance, desire and action, and consciousness has to struggle hard to get outside these.

The method is meditation as prescribed earlier. When this is done, there is at once a transformation of mortal consciousness to immortality. Nothing further is to be said.

Now follows a concluding set of three mantras which do not add any new knowledge, but only form the conclusion.

Seeking the Self

śataṁ caikā ca hṛdayasya nāḍyas tāsām mūrdhānam abhiniḥsṛtaikā:

tayordhvam āyann amṛtatvam eti, viṣvaṅṅ anyā utkramaṇe bhavanti. (16)

Some sort of relation can be established between mantras fifteen and sixteen: while the former mentions the three knots, the latter mentions the *nadis* that emanate from the three knots. "There are a hundred and one currents of the heart, called *nadis*. One of them rises up to the crown of the head. By passing through that, one becomes immortal. But by passing through any other, one becomes fit for rebirth in some other realm." Also in the Yoga Shastras it is said that internal to and pervading the physical body, which is constituted of flesh, muscles, blood and bones, we have a set of subtle tubes called *nadis*. They are subtler than the nerves referred to in modern physiology. Some Upanishads say that there are seventy-two thousand of them, and that their width is that of a hair split into hundred parts. It is through them that the *prana* moves, just as electricity passes through a wire. There is no part of the body where one or the other of them is not present. It is also said that we have seventy-two thousand hairs or pores on our body, though no one has counted them. These *nadis* form the connecting link between the physical and subtle body; thus they are psycho-physical in nature.

Of all these, a hundred and one are very important, the most important ones being three. They are *ida*, *pingala* and *sushumna*. The latter is the central nerve-current, and generally it does not function; either *ida* or *pingala* do, which are also called *chandra-nadi* and *surya-nadi*, the cooling and heating current respectively, flowing through the left and right nostril. These three *nadis* are indicators of

our psychological condition too. We should not allow only one of them to work throughout the day.

So yogins influence their flow, but this is only a lower aspect of their function. In the Upanishad, we are concerned with the higher ones. *Ida* and *pingala* bring about world-consciousness. The sun and moon represent their two poles, and we roam between them. But when the energy is made to move through *sushumna* to the crown of the head, the right and left nostril cease to function, and breath-retention takes place. By the artificial method of *kumbhaka*, we force the prana in a physical way upwards. The Tantra and Hatha Yogas are concerned with this aspect, as against the psychological and spiritual ones of meditation in the Upanishads. The *prana* is made to flow through the central *sushumna* by *pranayama*, by exerting pressure on the *muladhara-chakra* and by *bandha-traya*. When this is done protractedly, heat is created, which causes the rushing up of energy. This is a very difficult process and is not advised for an impure mind. The technique is all right, but the person has to be very cautious. He should be without worldly cravings.

This *sushumna* is the trunk of which many *nadis* ramify in all directions, just as the branches of a tree shoot out variously. When the time of death comes, what happens?

The outer form of our system is a mixture of the five elements. Internal to it are the *nadis*. Internal to the *nadis* is the energy or vitality. And internal to these is the mind, internal to which is consciousness. There is a tremendous shake up of all five *koshas* at the time of death. What passes on is not consciousness as such, because that is everywhere. What passes is the mind.

Mind and intelligence, when they are animated by consciousness, make the *jiva*, and when we talk of death we are concerned with the *jiva*. Consciousness cannot move, but mind does. And when it seeks an exit, if it passes through the *sushumna-nadi*, it reaches immortality because of having brought about a balance. When the mind passes through *sushumna*, there is neither inspiration nor expiration. Whenever we are world or object-conscious, we are distracted. Just as the condition of the world is indicated by the position of the planets, the condition of the whole human system is indicated by the flow of breath. Sometimes we breathe slowly, sometimes fast, etc. The *svara-shastra* deals with this subject. The breathing process is an indication of our mental condition also. We are therefore not so much concerned with breath but with the cause behind it. So all the physical controls cannot directly help in God-realisation, as the process of breathing outside is connected with the mind inside.

It is very difficult to say what enters the *sushumna*—it not being air but *prana*, which is energy. It is a peculiar admixture of the psycho-physical force, the total force in the body, which is called *jiva*. It is this *jiva* that finds its exit through *sushumna*. And when this happens there is a harmony of consciousness, which is called *samadhi*. When there is world or body-consciousness, we are out of balance. *Samadhi* is equilibrium of consciousness between the subject and the object. The Yoga Vasistha says that our body is made up of mind only, and that we are under the illusion of it being a hard object, even as we are in dream when we see hard objects while they are not really there. In the proportionate state of *samadhi*, the body gets

evaporated into consciousness. So if one passes away through *sushumna*, he becomes immortal, because there is *samadhi* at once. But if he goes through other *nadis*, the soul has to take rebirth.

aṅgusṭhamātraḥ puruṣo'ntarātmā sadā janānām hṛdaye sanniviṣṭaḥ,
taṁ svāc charīrāt pravṛhen muñjād iveṣīkāṁ dhairyeṇa,
taṁ vidyāc chukram amṛtaṁ taṁ vidyāc chukram amṛtaṁ iti. (17)

"The *purusha*, of the size of a thumb, dwells always in the heart of men. Him one should draw out from the body, as the stalk from a blade of grass. Him one should know as the Pure, the Immortal." Consciousness is compared to the *purusha* of the size of a thumb. This is for the sake of concentration and meditation. In relation to His entry into various beings, this universal Self appears to be of the size of a thumb; and He is in all.

This consciousness is to be separated from the body, like separating the pith of the *munja* grass or the plantain stem from its outer covering, as is done in various rituals; the covering is to be removed. Likewise, the body is to be isolated from consciousness; and this consciousness is to be concentrated on itself; then it becomes immortal. "Know this to be the Pure, Immortal—know this to be the Pure, Immortal." This is the teaching of the Upanishad.

This Teaching: A Way to Immortality

mṛtyu-protāṁ naciketo'tha labdhvā vidyām etām yoga-vidhiṁ ca kṛtsnam,
brahmaprāpto virajo'bhūd vimṛtyur anyopy evam yo vid adhyātmam eva. (18)

This is something like the last Verse of the Gita: "Having received this wisdom, as well as the rule of yoga from Yama, Nachiketas attained Brahman, having been freed from impurities and death. And so will any other who has this knowledge of the inmost Self."

This is *brahma-vidya* and *yoga-shastra*—having attained this in its totality and completeness from Yama, Nachiketas attained Brahman, because he was free from all desires. This practice of yoga, knowledge of Brahman and freedom from death is a universal truth. As Nachiketas attained, so can any other.

To this *adhyatma-vidya*, you take the totality of your being. It is the supreme *vidya*, because while all others give knowledge of things in relation to space and time, in *adhyatma-vidya* we gain knowledge of the Absolute Self, or *ishvara*. Having thus been freed from *rajas* and *tamas*, desire and the impulse to selfish action, one reaches Brahman.

THE KATHA UPANISHAD

Sanskrit, Transliteration and Translation
by H.H. Sri Swami Sivananda

॥ अथ कठोपनिषद्॥

|| atha kaṭhopaniṣad ||

SHANTI MANTRA - PEACE PRAYER

ॐसहनाववतु।सहनौभुनक्तु।सहवीर्यंकरवावहै।
तेजस्विनावधीतमस्तु।माविद्विषावहै॥
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः॥

auṁ sa ha nāv avatu, saha nau bhunaktu, saha vīryam karavāvahai: tejasvi nāv adhītam astu: mā vidviṣāvahai; auṁ śāntih, śāntih, śāntih.

OM! May He protect us both (teacher and pupil). May He cause us both to enjoy the bliss of *mukti*. May we both exert to find out the true meaning of the scriptures. May our studies be fruitful. May we never quarrel with each other. Om Peace! Om Peace! Om Peace!

FIRST CHAPTER

FIRST VALLI

Prologue: Nachiketas Devoted to Death

Background...

ॐ उशन् ह वै वाजश्रवसः सर्ववेदसं ददौ।
तस्य ह नचिकेता नाम पुत्र आस॥१॥

uśan ha vai vājaśravasaḥ sarva-vedasaṁ dadau:
tasya ha naciketā nāma putra āsa. (1)

Once, desirous of heaven, the son of Vajasravasa (Gautama) gave (in a sacrifice) all that he possessed. He had a son Nachiketas by name. (I.1.1)

तँ ह कुमारँ सन्तं दक्शिणासु
नीयमानासु श्रद्धाविवेश सोऽमन्यत॥२॥

taṁ ha kumāraṁ santaṁ dakṣiṇāsu nīyamānāsu śraddhā-viveśa, so'manyata. (2)

When the presents were being distributed, filial anxiety (about the welfare of his father) entered into the heart of Nachiketas, who was still a boy, and he thought. (I.1.2)

Nachiketas thought...

पीतोदका जग्धतृणा दुग्धदोहा निरिन्द्रियाः।
अनन्दा नाम ते लोकास्तान् स गच्छति ता ददत्॥३॥

pītodakā jagdha-tṛṇā dugdhadohā nirindriyāḥ
anandā nāma te lokās tān sa gacchata tā dadat. (3)

Joyless verily are those worlds to which a man goes by giving (presents in a sacrifice) cows which have drunk water, eaten grass, given their milk and are barren. (I.1.3)

Nachiketas and his father...

स होवाच पितरं तत कस्मै मां दास्यसीति।
द्वितीयं तृतीयं तँ होवाच मृत्यवे त्वा ददामीति॥४॥

sa hovāca pitaram, tāta kasmai māṁ dāsyasīti;
dvitīyaṁ tṛtīyam; taṁ hovāca: mṛtyave tvā dadāmīti. (4)

O father, to whom wilt thou give me? He said this again and for the third time, the (enraged) father said: To Death I will give thee. (I.1.4)

Nachiketas reflects...

बहूनामेमि प्रथमो बहूनामेमि मध्यमः।
किँ स्विद्यमस्य कर्तव्यं यन्मयाऽद्य करिष्यति॥५॥

bahūnām emi prathamaḥ, bahūnām emi madhyamaḥ;
kiṁ svid yamasya kartavyam yan mayādya kariṣyati. (5)

Among many I go as the first; among many I go in the middle. What will be the work of Yama which today he has to do unto me? (I.1.5)

Nachiketas...

अनुपश्य यथा पूर्वे प्रतिपश्य तथाऽपरे।
सस्यमिव मर्त्यः पच्यते सस्यमिवाजायते पुनः॥६॥

anupaśya yathā pūrve pratipaśya tathāpare,
sasyam iva martyaḥ pacyate sasyam ivajāyate punaḥ. (6)

Remember how our forefathers acted; consider also how others now act. Like corn, the mortal decays and like

corn he is born again. (Nachiketas entered into the abode of Yama Vaivasvata. There was no one to receive him. Yama had gone out.) (I.1.6)

Nachiketas in the House of Death

Voice...

वैश्वानरःप्रविशत्यतिथिर्ब्राह्मणोगृहान्।
तस्यैताँ शान्तिं कुर्वन्ति हर वैवस्वतोदकम्॥७॥

vaiśvānaraḥ praviśaty atithir brāhmaṇo gṛhān:
tasyaitāṁ śāntiṁ kurvanti, hara vaivasvatodakam. (7)

A *brahmin* guest enters a house like fire. For him men give this peace-offering (to quench the fire or quiet him). Bring water, O Vaivasvata (O son of Vivasvan, the Sun). (I.1.7)

Warning on the Neglect to a Brahman Guest

आशाप्रतीक्शे संगतँ सूनृतां चेष्टापूर्ते पुत्रपशूँश्च सर्वान्।
एतद्वृङ्क्ते पुरुषस्याल्पमेधसो यस्यानश्नन्वसति ब्राह्मणो गृहे॥८॥

āśā-pratīkṣe saṁgataṁ sūnṛtāṁ ceṣṭāpūrte putra-paśūṁś ca sarvān
etad vṛṅkte puruṣasyālpamedhaso yasyānaśnan vasati brāhmaṇo gṛhe. (8)

Hope, expectation, company with good men, friendly discourse, sacrifices, pious gifts, sons and cattle—all these are destroyed in the case of the ignorant man, in whose house a *brahmin* guest stays without taking food. (I.1.8)

Three Boons Offered to Nachiketas

Yama...

तिस्रो रात्रीर्यदवात्सीर्गृहे मे-ऽनश्नन् ब्रह्मन्नतिथिर्नमस्यः।
नमस्तेऽस्तु ब्रह्मन् स्वस्ति मेऽस्तु तस्मात्प्रति
त्रीन्वरान्वृणीष्व॥९॥

tisro rātrīr yād avatsīr gṛhe me'naśnan brahman atitthir namasyaḥ.
namaste'ṡtu brahman; svasti me'stu tasmāt prati trīn varān vṛṇīṣva. (9)

O *brahmin*, as thou a venerable guest, hast dwelt in my house three nights without eating, therefore choose now three boons in return. O *brahmin*, my prostrations unto thee. May good befall me. (I.1.9)

Nachiketas's First Wish:
Return to an Appeased Father on Earth

Nachiketas...

शान्तसंकल्पः सुमना यथा स्याद् वीतमन्युर्गौतमो माऽभि मृत्यो।
त्वत्प्रसृष्टम् माऽभिवदेत्प्रतीत एतत् त्रयाणां प्रथमं वरं वृणे॥१०॥

śānta-saṁkalpaḥ sumanā yathā syād vīta-manyur gautamo mābhi mṛtyo,
tvat-prasṛṣṭam mābhivadet-pratīta, etat trayāṇām prathamaṁ varaṁ vṛṇe. (10)

O Death! As the first of the three boons, I choose that Gautama, my father, be pacified, kind and free from anger towards me, and that he may know me and greet me, when I shall be sent away by thee. (I.1.10)

Yama...

यथा पुरस्ताद् भविता प्रतीत औद्दालकिरारुणिर्मत्प्रसृष्टः।
सुखँ रात्रीः शयिता वीतमन्युः त्वां ददृशिवान्मृत्युमुखात्
प्रमुक्तम्॥११॥

yathā purastād bhavitā pratīta auddālakir āruṇir
matprasṛṣṭaḥ,
sukhaṁ rātrīś śayitā vītamanyus tvāṁ dadṛśivān
mṛtyumukhāt pramuktam. (11)

Through my favour, Auddalaki, the son of Aruni, will recognise you as before. He will sleep peacefully at night and when he sees you released from the mouth of death, will lose his anger. (I.1.11)

Nachiketas's Second Wish
Understanding of the Sacrifical Fire

Nachiketas...

स्वर्गे लोके न भयं किंचनास्ति न तत्र त्वं न जरया बिभेति।
उभे तीर्त्वाऽशनायापिपासे शोकातिगो मोदते स्वर्गलोके॥१२॥

svarge loke na bhayaṁ kiṁ ca nāsti na tatra tvaṁ na jarayā
bibheti.
ubhe tīrtvā aśanāyā pipāse śokātigo modate svarga-loke. (12)

In the heaven there is no fear; thou art not there, O Death, and no one is afraid on account of old age. Having conquered both hunger and thirst, one rejoices in heaven, being above sorrow. (I.1.12)

स त्वमग्निँ स्वर्ग्यमध्येषि मृत्यो प्रब्रूहि त्वँ श्रद्दधानाय मह्यम्।
स्वर्गलोका अमृतत्वं भजन्त एतद् द्वितीयेन वृणे वरेण॥१३॥

sa tvam agniṁ svargyam adhyeṣi mṛtyo, prabrūhi taṁ śraddadānāya mahyam
svarga-lokā amṛtatvam bhajanta, etad dvitīyena vṛṇe vareṇa. (13)

O Death! Thou knowest the fire-sacrifice which leads us to heaven; explain it to me, for I am full of faith. Those who live in the world attain immortality—this I ask as my second boon. (I.1.13)

Yama...

प्र ते ब्रवीमि तदु मे निबोध स्वर्ग्यमग्निं नचिकेतः प्रजानन्।
अनन्तलोकाप्तिमथो प्रतिष्ठां विद्धि त्वमेतं निहितं गुहायाम्॥१४॥

pra te bravīmi tad u me nibodha svargyam agniṁ naciketaḥ prajānan
anantalokāptim atho pratiṣṭhāṁ viddhi, tvam etaṁ nihitaṁ guhāyām. (14)

I will tell thee well, learn it from me, O Nachiketas. I know the fire that leads to heaven; know the fire which leads to heaven (which is the cause of acquiring infinite worlds), and which again is the support of the universe and which is seated in the cavity (of the heart). (I.1.14)

Narrative...

लोकादिमग्निं तमुवाच तस्मै या इष्टका यावतीर्वा यथा वा।
स चापि तत्प्रत्यवदद्यथोक्तं अथास्य मृत्युः पुनरेवाह तुष्टः॥१५॥

lokādim agniṃ tam uvāca tasmai, yā iṣṭakā, yāvatīr vā, yathā vā.

sa cāpi tat pratsvadat yathoktam; athāsya mṛtyuḥ punar evāha tuṣṭaḥ. (15)

Yama then explained to him that fire-sacrifice, the source of the worlds, what bricks are required for the altar, how many and how they are to be placed, and Nachiketas repeated all as explained. Then Yama, being pleased with him, said again. (I.1.15)

तमब्रवीत् प्रीयमाणो महात्मा वरं तवेहाद्य ददामि भूयः।
तवैव नाम्ना भविताऽयमग्निः सृङ्कां चेमामनेकरूपां
गृहाण॥१६॥

tam abravīt prīyamāṇo mahātmā varaṁ tavehādya dadāmi bhūyaḥ.
tavaiva nāmnā bhavitāyam agniḥ, sṛṅkāṁ cemām aneka-rūpāṁ gṛhāṇa. (16)

Satisfied, magnanimous Death spoke to him: I give thee here this other boon, this fire-sacrifice shall be named after thee, and take thou this many-coloured chain. (I.1.16)

त्रिणाचिकेतस्त्रिभिरेत्य सन्धिं त्रिकर्मकृत्तरति जन्ममृत्यू।
ब्रह्मजज्ञं देवमीड्यं विदित्वा निचाय्येमाँ
शान्तिमत्यन्तमेति॥१७॥

triṇāciketas tribhir etya sandhiṁ trikarma-kṛt tarati janma-mṛtyū
brahmajajñaṁ devam īḍyam viditvā nicāyye'māṁ śāntim atyantam eti. (17)

Whoever performs three times this sacrifice of Nachiketas fire and has been united with the three (father, mother and teacher) and has performed the three duties (study, sacrifice and alms-giving) overcomes birth and

death. When he has understood this adorable bright, the omniscient fire born of Brahman and realised him, then he obtains everlasting peace. (I.1.17)

त्रिणाचिकेतस्त्रयमेतद्विदित्वा य एवं विद्वाँश्चिनुते नाचिकेतम्।
स मृत्युपाशान् पुरतः प्रणोद्य शोकातिगो मोदते स्वर्गलोके॥१८॥

triṇāciketas trayam etad viditvā ya evaṁ vidvāṁś cinute nāciketam,
sa mṛtyu-pāśān purataḥ praṇodya śokātigo modate svarga-loke. (18)

He who knows the three Nachiketa fires, and propitiates the Nachiketa fire with this knowledge, throws off the chains of death, goes beyond sorrow and rejoices in heaven. (I.1.18)

एष तेऽग्निर्नचिकेतः स्वर्ग्यो यमवृणीथा द्वितीयेन वरेण।
एतमग्निं तवैव प्रवक्श्यन्ति जनासः तृतीयं वरं नचिकेतो वृणीष्व॥१९॥

eṣa te'gnir naciketas svargyo yam avṛṇīthāḥ dvitīyena vareṇa.
etam agnim tavaiva pravakṣyanti janāsas; tṛtīyaṁ varaṁ naciketo vṛṇīṣva. (19)

This, O Nachiketas, is thy fire which leads to heaven and which thou hast chosen as thy second boon; people will call this fire thine alone. Choose now, O Nachiketas, thy third boon. (I.1.19)

Nachiketas's Third Wish
Knowledge Concerning the Final Death

Nachiketas...

येयं प्रेते विचिकित्सा मनुष्ये-ऽस्तीत्येके नायमस्तीति चैके।

एतद्विद्यामनुशिष्टस्त्वयाऽहं वराणामेष वरस्तृतीयः॥२०॥

yeyam prete vicikitsā manuṣye'stītyeke nāyam astīti caike;
etat vidyām anuśiṣṭas tvayāham, varāṇām eṣa varas tṛtīyaḥ.
(20)

There is that doubt when a man is dead, some say he is and some he is not this I should like to know, taught by thee. This is the third of my boons. (I.1.20)

Yama...

देवैरत्रापि विचिकित्सितं पुरा न हि सुविज्ञेयमणुरेष धर्मः।
अन्यं वरं नचिकेतो वृणीष्व मा मोपरोत्सीरति मा सृजैनम्॥२१॥

devair atrāpi vicikitsitam purā, na hi suvijñeyam, aṇur eṣa dharmaḥ.
anyaṁ varaṁ naciketo vṛṇīṣva, mā moparotsīr ati mā sṛjainam. (21)

On this point even the gods of olden times had doubt. Verily it is not easy to understand it—subtle is its nature. O Nachiketas, choose another boon; do not press me on this; give this up for me. (I.1.21)

This Knowledge is Prefereable to the Greatest Earthly Pleasures

Nachiketas...

देवैरत्रापि विचिकित्सितं किल त्वं च मृत्यो यन्न सुज्ञेयमात्थ।
वक्ता चास्य त्वादृगन्यो न लभ्यो नान्यो वरस्तुल्य एतस्य कश्चित्॥२२॥

devair atrāpi vicikitsitaṁ kila, tvaṁ ca mṛtyo yan na suvijñeyam āttha,
vaktā cāsya tvādṛg-anyo na labhyaḥ; nānyo varastulya etasya kaścit. (22)

Thou sayest, O Death, that even the gods had doubts here and that this is not easy to know. Another teacher like thee is not to be found; surely, there is no other boon like this. (I.1.22)

Yama...

शतायुषः पुत्रपौत्रान्वृणीष्वा बहून्पशून् हस्तिहिरण्यमश्वान्।
भूमेर्महदायतनं वृणीष्व स्वयं च जीव शरदो यावदिच्छसि॥२३॥

śatāyuṣaḥ putra-pautrān vṛṇīṣva bahūn paśūn hasti-hiraṇyam aśvān
bhūmer mahad-āyatanaṁ vṛṇīṣva svayaṁ ca jīva śarado yāvad icchasi. (23)

Choose sons and grandsons who may live a hundred years, herds of cattle, elephants, gold and horses. Choose the wide abode of the earth and live yourself as many years as you like. (I.1.23)

एतत्तुल्यं यदि मन्यसे वरं वृणीष्व वित्तं चिरजीविकां च।
महाभूमौ नचिकेतस्त्वमेधि कामानां त्वा कामभाजं करोमि॥२४॥

etat tulyam yadi manyase, varaṁ vṛṇīṣva, vittaṁ cira-jīvikāṁ ca,
mahā-bhūmau naciketas tvam edhi, kāmānāṁ tvā kāmabhājaṁ karomi. (24)

If you can think of any boon equal to that, choose wealth and long life. Be a king, O Nachiketas, of the wide earth, I shall make thee the enjoyer of all desires. (I.1.24)

येयेकामादुर्लभामर्त्यलोकेसर्वान् कामाँश्छन्दतःप्रार्थयस्व।
इमारामाःसरथाःसतूर्यानहीदृशालम्भनीयामनुष्यैः।
आभिर्मत्प्रत्ताभिःपरिचारयस्वनचिकेतोमरणंमाऽनुप्राक्शीः॥२५॥

ye ye kāmā durlabhā martya-loke sarvān kāmāṁś chandataḥ prārthayasva.
imā rāmāḥ, sarathāḥ satūryāḥ, na hīdṛśā lambhanīyā manuṣyaiḥ.
ābhir mat-prattābhiḥ paricārayasva, naciketo maraṇam mānuprākṣīḥ. (25)

Whatever desires are difficult to attain in the world of mortals, ask for them according to thy wish. These fair maidens with their chariots and musical instruments—such are indeed not enjoyable by mortals; be attended by them, I will give them to thee; but, O Nachiketas! Do not ask the question of the state of the Soul after death. (I.1.25)

Nachiketas...

श्वोभावा मर्त्यस्य यदन्तकैतत् सर्वेंद्रियाणां जरयंति तेजः।
अपि सर्वं जीवितमल्पमेव तवैव वाहास्तव नृत्यगीते॥२६॥

śvo-bhāvā martyasya yad antakaitat sarvendriyāṇām jarayanti tejaḥ
api sarvaṁ jīvitam alpam eva tavaiva vāhās tava nṛtya-gīte. (26)

These things last till tomorrow (ephemeral). O Death, they wear out the vigour of all the senses. Even the longest life is verily short. Keep thou thy chariots, the dance and music. (I.1.26)

न वित्तेन तर्पणीयो मनुष्यो लप्स्यामहे वित्तमद्राक्श्म चेत्त्वा।
जीविष्यामो यावदीशिष्यसि त्वं वरस्तु मे वरणीयः स एव॥२७॥

na vittena tarpaṇīyo manuśyaḥ, lapsyāmahe vittam adrākṣma cet tvā.
jīviṣyāmo yāvad īśiṣyasi tvaṁ varastu me varaṇīyaḥ sa eva. (27)

No man can be made happy by wealth. If we should obtain wealth and behold thee, we would only live as long as thou shalt sway. Only that boon which I have chosen is fit to be longed by me. (I.1.27)

अजीर्यताममृतानामुपेत्य जीर्यन्मर्त्यः क्वधःस्थः प्रजानन्।
अभिध्यायन् वर्णरतिप्रमोदान् अतिदीर्घे जीविते को रमेत॥२८॥

ajīryatām amṛtānām upetya jīryan martyaḥ kvadhasthaḥ prajānan
abhidhyāyan varṇaratipramodān, atidīrghe jīvite ko rameta. (28)

What decaying mortal living in the world below and possessed of knowledge, after having approached the company of the undecaying and the immortal, will rejoice in long life, after he has pondered over the nature of the pleasures produced by song and sport (beauty and love)? (I.1.28)

यस्मिन्निदं विचिकित्सन्ति मृत्यो यत्साम्पराये महति ब्रूहि नस्तत्।
योऽयं वरो गूढमनुप्रविष्टो नान्यं तस्मान्नचिकेता वृणीते॥२९॥

yasminn idam vicikitsanti mṛtyo yat sāmparāye mahati brūhi nas tat,
yo'yaṁ varo gūḍhamanupraviṣṭo nānyaṁ tasmān naciketā vṛṇīte. (29)

O Death! Tell us that in which men have this doubt, and which is about the great hereafter. Nachiketas does not choose any other boon but that (concerning the soul) of which the knowledge is hidden. (I.1.29)

SECOND VALLI

The Two Ways: The Good and the Pleasant

Yama...

अन्यच्छ्रेयोऽन्यदुतैव प्रेय-स्ते उभे नानार्थे पुरुषँ सिनीतः।
तयोः श्रेय आददानस्य साधु भवति हीयतेऽर्थाद्य उ प्रेयो
वृणीते॥१॥

anyac chreyo anyad utaiva preyaste ubhe nānārthe puruṣam sinītaḥ:
tayoḥ śreya ādadānasya sādhu bhavati, hīyate'rthād ya u preyo vṛṇīte. (1)

One is good, while another is pleasant. These two having different objects chain a man. Blessed is he who, between them chooses the good alone, but he who chooses what is pleasant, loses the true end. (I.2.1)

श्रेयश्च प्रेयश्च मनुष्यमेतः तौ सम्परीत्य विविनक्ति धीरः।
श्रेयो हि धीरोऽभि प्रेयसो वृणीते प्रेयो मन्दो
योगक्शेमाद्वृणीते॥२॥

śreyaś ca preyaś ca manuṣyam etas tau samparītya vivinakti dhīraḥ.
śreyo hi dhīro'bhipreyaso vṛṇīte, preyo mando yoga-kṣemād vṛṇīte. (2)

The good and the pleasant take hold of man; the wise man examines and distinguishes them. The wise man prefers the good (*sreyas*) to the pleasant, but the ignorant man chooses the pleasant (*preyas*) for the sake of the body. (I.2.2)

स त्वं प्रियान्प्रियरूपांश्च कामान्
अभिध्यायन्नचिकेतोऽत्यस्राक्शीः।
नैतां सृङ्कां वित्तमयीमवाप्तो यस्यां मज्जन्ति बहवो
मनुष्याः॥३॥

sa tvam priyān priyarūpāṁś ca kāmān abhidhyāyan naciketo, tyasrākṣīḥ;
naitāṁ sṛṅkāṁ vittamayīm avāpto yasyām majjanti bahavo manuṣyāḥ. (3)

O Nachiketas, thou hast renounced objects of desires (such as sons and grandsons) and desirable objects of pleasant shape (as the heavenly nymphs), judging them by their real value. Thou hast not chosen the road of wealth, in which many men perish. (I.2.3)

दूरमेते विपरीते विषूची अविद्या या च विद्येति ज्ञाता।
विद्याभीप्सिनं नचिकेतसं मन्ये न त्वा कामा
बहवोऽलोलुपन्त॥४॥

dūram ete viparīte visūcī, avidyā yā ca vidyeti jñātā:
vidyābhīpsinaṁ naciketasam manye, na tvā kāmā bahavo lolupantaḥ. (4)

These two, ignorance and knowledge, are wide apart and lead to different points or goals. I believe Nachiketas to be one who desires for knowledge, for even many desires have not shaken thee. (I.2.4)

अविद्यायामन्तरे वर्तमानाः स्वयं धीराः पण्डितंमन्यमानाः।
दन्द्रम्यमाणाः परियन्ति मूढा अन्धेनैव नीयमाना यथान्धाः॥५॥

avidyāyām antare vartamānāḥ, svayaṁ dhīrāḥ paṇḍitam manyamānāḥ.

dandramyamāṇāḥ pariyanti mūdhāḥ, andhenaiva nīyamānā yathāndhāḥ. (5)

The ignorant, who live in the midst of darkness but fancy themselves as wise and learned, go round and round deluded in many crooked ways, as blind people led by the blind. (I.2.5)

Heedlessness, the Cause of Rebirth

न साम्परायः प्रतिभाति बालं प्रमाद्यन्तं वित्तमोहेन मूढम्।
अयं लोको नास्ति पर इति मानी पुनः पुनर्वशमापद्यते मे॥६॥

na sāmparāyaḥ pratibhāti bālam pramādyantaṁ vitta-mohena mūḍham:
ayaṁ loko nāsti para iti mānī, punaḥ punar vaśam āpadyate me. (6)

The way to the hereafter is not apparent to the ignorant man who is foolish, deluded by the delusion of wealth. 'This is the world,' he thinks, 'there is no other'—thus he falls again and again under my sway. (I.2.6)

श्रवणायापि बहुभिर्यो न लभ्यः शृण्वन्तोऽपि बहवो यं न विद्युः।
आश्चर्यो वक्ता कुशलोऽस्य लब्धा आश्चर्यो ज्ञाता कुशलानुशिष्टः॥७॥

śravaṇāyāpi bahubhir yo na labhyaḥ, śṛṇvanto'pi bahavo yaṁ na vidyuḥ
āścaryo vaktā kuśalo'sya labdhā, āścaryo jñātā kuśalānuśiṣṭaḥ. (7)

He (the Self) of whom many are not even able to hear, whom many, even when they hear of him, do not comprehend; wonderful is a man, when found, who is able

to teach the Self; wonderful is he who comprehends the Self, when taught by an able teacher. (I.2.7)

न नरेणावरेण प्रोक्त एष सुविज्ञेयो बहुधा चिन्त्यमानः।
अनन्यप्रोक्ते गतिरत्र नास्ति अणीयान्
ह्यतर्क्यमणुप्रमाणात्॥८॥

na nareṇāvareṇa proktā eṣa suvijñeyo bahudhā cintyamānaḥ:
ananya-prokte gatir atra nāsty aṇīyān hy atarkyam
aṇupramānāt. (8)

That Self, when taught by a man of inferior intellect is not easy to be known, as it is to be thought of in various ways. But when it is taught by a preceptor who is one with Brahman than the subtle, and is not to be obtained by arguing. (I.2.8)

न नरेणावरेण प्रोक्त एष सुविज्ञेयो बहुधा चिन्त्यमानः।
अनन्यप्रोक्ते गतिरत्र नास्ति अणीयान्
ह्यतर्क्यमणुप्रमाणात्॥८॥

naiṣā tarkeṇa matir āpaneyā, proktānyenaiva sujñānāya
preṣṭha:
yāṁ tvam āpas satyadhritir batāsi; tvādṛṅ no bhūyān
naciketaḥ praṣṭā. (9)

This knowledge is not to be obtained by argument, but it is easy to understand it, O dearest, when taught by a teacher who beholds no difference; thou hast obtained it now; thou art fixed in truth. May we have, O Nachiketas, an enquirer like thee! (I.2.9)

The Requirement of Steadfast Renunciation and Meditation

Yama...

जानाम्यहं शेवधिरित्यनित्यं न ह्यध्रुवैः प्राप्यते हि ध्रुवं तत्।
ततो मया नाचिकेतश्चितोऽग्निः अनित्यैर्द्रव्यैः प्राप्तवानस्मि नित्यम्॥१०॥

jānāmy aham śevadhir ity anityam, na hy adhruvaiḥ prāpyate hi dhruvaṁ tat
tato mayā naciketaś cito'gnir anityair dravyaiḥ prāptavān asmi nityam. (10)

I know that the treasure is transient, for that eternal is not obtained by things which are not eternal. Therefore, the Nachiketa fire has been propitiated by me with the perishable things and I have obtained the eternal. (I.2.10)

कामस्याप्तिं जगतः प्रतिष्ठां क्रतोरानन्त्यमभयस्य पारम्।
स्तोममहदुरुगायं प्रतिष्ठां दृष्ट्वा धृत्या धीरो नचिकेतोऽत्यस्राक्शीः॥११॥

kāmasyāptiṁ jagataḥ pratiṣṭhāṁ krator ānantyaṁ abhayasya pāram
stoma-mahad urugāyam pratiṣṭhāṁ dṛṣṭvā dhṛtyā dhīro naciketo'tyasrākṣīḥ. (11)

The end of all desires, the foundation of the world, the endless rewards of sacrifice, the other shore where there is no fear, the praiseworthy, the great, the wide-extended sphere and the abode of the soul—all these thou hast seen, and being wise, O Nachiketas, thou hast with firm resolve rejected all. (I.2.11)

तं दुर्दर्शं गूढमनुप्रविष्टं गुहाहितं गह्वरेष्ठं पुराणम्।

अध्यात्मयोगाधिगमेन देवं मत्वा धीरो हर्षशोकौ जहाति॥१२॥

taṁ durdarśaṁ gūḍham anupraviṣṭaṁ guhāhitaṁ gahvareṣṭham purāṇam
adhyātma-yogādhigamena devam matvā dhīro harṣa-śokau jahāti. (12)

The wise sage who, by means of meditation on his Self, recognises the ancient, who is difficult to be seen, who is unfathomable and concealed, who is hidden in the cave of the heart, who dwells in the abyss, who is lodged in intelligence, indeed renounces joy and sorrow. (I.2.12)

एतच्छ्रुत्वा सम्परिगृह्य मर्त्यः प्रवृह्य धर्म्यमणुमेतमाप्य।
स मोदते मोदनीयँ हि लब्ध्वा विवृतँ सद्म नचिकेतसं मन्ये॥१३॥

etac chrutvā samparigṛhya martyaḥ pravṛhya dharmyam aṇum etam āpya
sa modate modanīyaṁ hi labdhvā vivṛtaṁ sadma naciketasam manye. (13)

Having heard and well grasped this (the Self), the mortal, abstracting the virtuous Atman, attaining this subtle Self, rejoices, because he has obtained what is cause for rejoicing. I think that the abode of Brahman is wide open for Nachiketas. (I.2.13)

Nachiketas...

अन्यत्र धर्मादन्यत्राधर्मा-दन्यत्रास्मात्कृताकृतात्।
अन्यत्र भूताच्च भव्याच्च यत्तत्पश्यसि तद्वद॥१४॥

anyatra dharmād anyatrādharmād anyatrāsmāt kṛtākṛtāt.
anyatra bhūtāc ca bhavyāc ca yat tat paśyasi tad vada. (14)

That which thou seest as other than virtue and vice, other than cause and effect, other than the past and future, tell me that. (I.2.14)

Yama...

सर्वे वेदा यत्पदमामनन्ति तपा□सि सर्वाणि च यद्वदन्ति।
यदिच्छन्तो ब्रह्मचर्यं चरन्ति तत्ते पद□संग्रहेण
ब्रवीम्योमित्येतत्॥१५॥

sarve vedā yat padam āmananti tapāṁsi sarvāṇi ca yad vadanti,
yad icchanto brahmacaryaṁ caranti, tat te padaṁ saṁgraheṇa bravīmi: aum ity etat. (15)

The goal (word) which all the *vedas* speak of (praise), which all penances proclaim and wishing for which they lead the life of a *brahmacharin*, that goal (word) I will briefly tell thee—It is *Om*. (I.2.15)

एतद्ध्येवाक्शरं ब्रह्म एतद्ध्येवाक्शरं परम्।
एतद्ध्येवाक्शरं ज्ञात्वा यो यदिच्छति तस्य तत्॥१६॥

etadd hy evākṣaram brahma, etadd hy evākṣaram param
etadd hy evākṣaram jñātvā, yo yad icchati tasya tat. (16)

This word is verily Brahman; this word is verily the highest; he who knows this word, obtains, verily, whatever he desires. (I.2.16)

एतदालम्बनँ श्रेष्ठमेतदालम्बनं परम्।
एतदालम्बनं ज्ञात्वा ब्रह्मलोके महीयते॥१७॥

etad ālambanaṁ śreṣṭham etad ālambanam param
etad ālambanaṁ jñātvā brahma-loke mahīyate. (17)

This is the best support. This is the highest support. He who knows this support is worshipped in the world of Brahman. (I.2.17)

The Eternal Indestructable Soul

न जायते म्रियते वा विपश्चिन् नायं कुतश्चिन्न बभूव कश्चित्।
अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे॥१८॥

na jāyate mriyate vā vipaścin nāyaṁ kutaścin na babhūva kaścit:
ajo nityaḥ śaśvato'yam purāṇo na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre. (18)

The intelligent Atman is not born, nor does He die; He did not spring from anything, and nothing sprang from Him; unborn, eternal, everlasting, ancient, He is not slain although the body is slain. (I.2.18)

हन्ता चेन्मन्यते हन्तुँ हतश्चेन्मन्यते हतम्।
उभौ तौ न विजानीतो नायँ हन्ति न हन्यते॥१९॥

hantā cen manyate hantuṁ hataś cen manyate hatam,
ubhau tau na vijānīto nāyaṁ hanti na hanyate. (19)

If the slayer thinks 'I slay,' if the slain thinks, 'I am slain,' then both of them do not know well. This slays not, nor is slain. (I.2.19)

अणोरणीयान्महतो महीया-नात्माऽस्य जन्तोर्निहितो गुहायाम्।
तमक्रतुः पश्यति वीतशोको धातुप्रसादान्महिमानमात्मनः॥२०॥

aṇor aṇīyān mahato mahīyān, ātmāsya jantor nihito guhāyām:
tam akratuḥ paśyati vīta-śoko dhātu-prasādān mahimānam ātmanaḥ. (20)

The Atman, subtler than the subtle, greater than the great, is seated in the heart of each living being. He who is free from desire, with his mind and the senses composed, beholds the majesty of the Self and becomes free from sorrow. (I.2.20)

The Opposite Characteristics of the Supreme

Yama...

आसीनो दूरं व्रजति शयानो याति सर्वतः।
कस्तं मदामदं देवं मदन्यो ज्ञातुमर्हति॥२१॥

āsīno dūraṁ vrajati, śayāno yāti sarvataḥ:
kastam madāmadaṁ devam mad anyo jñātum arharti. (21)

Sitting He goes far; lying He goes everywhere. Who else, therefore, save myself, is able to comprehend the God who rejoices and rejoices not? (I.2.21)

अशरीरँ शरीरेष्वनवस्थेष्ववस्थितम्।
महान्तं विभुमात्मानं मत्वा धीरो न शोचति॥२२॥

aśarīraṁ śarīreṣu, anavastheṣv avasthitam,
mahāntaṁ vibhum ātmānam matvā dhīro na śocati. (22)

The wise man, who knows the Atman as bodiless, seated firmly in perishable bodies, great and all-pervading, does never grieve. (I.2.22)

The Conditions of Knowing Him

Yama...

नायमात्माप्रवचनेनलभ्योनमेधयानबहुनाश्रुतेन।
यमेवैषवृणुतेतेनलभ्यःतस्यैषआत्माविवृणुतेतनू□स्वाम्॥२३॥

nāyam ātmā pravacanena labhyo na medhayā, na bahunā śrutena:
yamevaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyas tasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛṇute tanūṁ svām. (23)

This Atman cannot be attained by study of the *vedas*, nor by intelligence, nor by much hearing. He whom the Self chooses, by him the Self can be gained. To him this Atman reveals Its true nature. (I.2.23)

नाविरतो दुश्चरितान्नाशान्तो नासमाहितः।
नाशान्तमानसो वाऽपि प्रज्ञानेनैनमाप्नुयात्॥२४॥

nāvirato duśćaritān nāśānto nāsamāhitaḥ
nāśānta-mānaso vāpi prajñānenainam āpnuyāt. (24)

But he who has not turned away from bad conduct, whose senses are not subdued, whose mind is not concentrated, whose mind is not pacified, can never obtain this Atman by knowledge. (I.2.24)

यस्य ब्रह्म च क्शत्रं च उभे भवत ओदनः।
मृत्युर्यस्योपसेचनं क इत्था वेद यत्र सः॥२५॥

yasya brahma ca kṣatraṁ ca ubhe bhavata odanaḥ
mṛtyur yasyopasecanaṁ ka itthā veda yatra saḥ. (25)

Of whom, the *brahmana* and the *kshatriya* classes are (as it were) but food, and Death itself a condiment (or pickle), how can one thus know where that Atman is? (I.2.25)

इतिकाठकोपनिषदिप्रथमाध्यायेद्वितीयावल्ली॥

iti kāṭhakopaniṣadi prathamādhyāye dvitīyā vallī ||

THIRD VALLI

Two Selves: The Universal and Individual Soul

Yama...

ऋतं पिबन्तौ सुकृतस्य लोके गुहां प्रविष्टौ परमे परार्धे।
छायातपौ ब्रह्मविदो वदन्ति पञ्चाग्नयो ये च त्रिणाचिकेताः॥१॥

ṛtam pibantau sukṛtasya loke guhām praviṣṭau parame parārdhe,
chāyā-tapau brahma-vido vadanti, pañcāgnayo ye ca tri-ṇāciketāḥ. (1)

The two who enjoy the fruits of their good works being seated in the cavity of the seat of the Supreme, the knowers of Brahman call them shadow and light, as also the performers of the fivefold fire and those who have propitiated three times the Nachiketa fire. (I.3.1)

The Nachiketas Sacrificial Fire as an Aid

यः सेतुरीजानानामक्शरं ब्रह्म यत् परम्।
अभयं तितीर्षतां पारं नाचिकेतँ शकेमहि॥२॥

yas setur ījānānām akṣaram brahma yat param,
abhayam titīrṣatām pāram nāciketaṁ śakemahi. (2)

We are able to understand both, the Nachiketa fire which is the bridge of all sacrifices (to cross misery) and also the highest, indestructible Brahman, fearless and the refuge for those who wish to cross the ocean of *samsara*. (I.3.2)

Parable of the Individual Soul in a Chariot

Yama...

आत्मानँ रथितं विद्धि शरीरँ रथमेव तु।
बुद्धिं तु सारथिं विद्धि मनः प्रग्रहमेव च॥३॥

ātmānaṁ rathinaṁ viddhi, śarīraṁ rathameva tu:
buddhiṁ tu sāradhiṁ viddhi, manaḥ pragraham eva ca. (3)

Know the Atman as the Lord of the chariot, the body as the chariot; know the intellect as the charioteer and the mind again as the reins. (I.3.3)

इन्द्रियाणि हयानाहुर्विषयाँ स्तेषु गोचरान्।
आत्मेन्द्रियमनोयुक्तं भोक्तेत्याहुर्मनीषिणः॥४॥

indriyāṇi hayān āhur viṣayāṁs teṣu gocarān,
ātmendriya-mano-yuktam bhoktety āhur manīṣiṇaḥ. (4)

They say, the senses are the horses and their objects are the roads; the Atman, the senses and the mind united, the wise call the enjoyer. (I.3.4)

यस्त्वविज्ञानवान्भवत्ययुक्तेन मनसा सदा।
तस्येन्द्रियाण्यवश्यानि दुष्टाश्वा इव सारथेः॥५॥

yas tv avijñānavān bhavaty ayuktena manasā sadā,
tasyendriyāṇy avaśyāni duṣṭāśvā iva sāratheḥ. (5)

He who has no discrimination and whose mind is always uncontrolled, his senses are not controllable like vicious horses of a driver. (I.3.5)

यस्तु विज्ञानवान्भवति युक्तेन मनसा सदा।
तस्येन्द्रियाणि वश्यानि सदश्वा इव सारथेः॥६॥

yas tu vijñānavān bhavati, yuktena manasā sadā,

tasyendriyāṇi vaśyāni sadaśvā iva sāratheḥ. (6)

But he who has understanding and whose mind is always controlled, his senses are under control like good horses of a driver. (I.3.6)

Intelligent Control of the Soul's Chariot Necessary

यस्त्वविज्ञानवान्भवत्यमनस्कः सदाऽशुचिः।
न स तत्पदमाप्नोति संसारं चाधिगच्छति॥७॥

yas tv avijñānavān bhavaty amanaskas sadā'śuciḥ
na sa tat padam āpnoti saṁsāraṁ cādhigacchati. (7)

But he, who has no discrimination, and whose mind is not under control, and who is always impure, does not reach that goal, but enters into the round of births and deaths. (I.3.7)

यस्तु विज्ञानवान्भवति समनस्कः सदा शुचिः।
स तु तत्पदमाप्नोति यस्माद्भूयो न जायते॥८॥

yas tu vijñānavān bhavati samanaskas sadā śuciḥ,
sa tu tat padam āpnoti yasmāt bhūyo na jāyate. (8)

But he, who has understanding, who has his mind always under control, and who is pure, reaches that goal whence he is not born again. (I.3.8)

विज्ञानसारथिर्यस्तु मनः प्रग्रहवान्नरः।
सोऽध्वनः पारमाप्नोति तद्विष्णोः परमं पदम्॥९॥

vijñānasārathir yastu manaḥ pragrahavān naraḥ,
so'dhvanaḥ param āpnoti tad viṣṇoḥ paramam padam. (9)

But he who has discerning intelligence as the driver and a well-controlled mind as the reins, reaches the end of his journey, that highest place of Vishnu. (I.3.9)

The Order of Progression to the Supreme

Yama...

इन्द्रियेभ्यः परा ह्यर्था अर्थेभ्यश्च परं मनः।
मनसस्तु परा बुद्धिर्बुद्धेरात्मा महान्परः॥१०॥

indriyebhyaḥ parā hy arthā, arthebhyaś ca param manaḥ,
manasaś ca parā buddhir buddher ātmā mahān paraḥ. (10)

Beyond the senses are the rudiments of objects, beyond these rudiments is the mind, beyond the mind is the intellect, beyond the intellect is the great Self. (I.3.10)

महतः परमव्यक्तमव्यक्तात्पुरुषः परः।
पुरुषान्न परं किंचित्सा काष्ठा सा परा गतिः॥११॥

mahataḥ param avyaktam, avyaktāt puruṣaḥ paraḥ
puruṣān na paraṁ kiñcit: sā kāṣṭhā sā parā gatiḥ. (11)

Beyond the great (*mahat*) is the unmanifested (*avyakta*). Beyond the *avyakta* is the Purusha, beyond the Purusha there is nothing, that is the end, that is the highest goal. (I.3.11)

The Method of Yoga

Yama...

एष सर्वेषु भूतेषु गूढोऽऽत्मा न प्रकाशते।
दृश्यते त्वग्र्यया बुद्ध्या सूक्श्मया सूक्श्मदर्शिभिः॥१२॥

eṣa sarveṣu bhūteṣu gūdho’tmā na prakāśate,
dṛśyate tvagryayā buddhyā sūkṣmayā sūkṣma-darśibhiḥ. (12)

This Atman is hidden in all beings and does not shine forth, but it is seen by subtle seers through their sharp and subtle intellect. (I.3.12)

यच्छेद्वाङ्मनसी प्राज्ञस्तद्यच्छेज्ज्ञान आत्मनि।
ज्ञानमात्मनि महति नियच्छेत्तद्यच्छेच्छान्त आत्मनि॥१३॥

yacched vāṅ manasī prājñas tad yacchej jñāna-ātmani
jñānam ātmani mahati niyacchet, tad yacchec chāntav-ātmani. (13)

Let the wise sink his speech into the mind, the mind into the intellect and the intellect into the great Atman and the great Atman into the peaceful Atman. (I.3.13)

Exhortation and Call to the Way of Liberation from Death

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत।
क्शुरस्य धारा निशिता दुरत्यया दुर्गं पथस्तत्कवयो वदन्ति॥१४॥

uttiṣṭhata jāgrata prāpya varān nibodhata:
kṣurasya dhārā niśitā duratyayā; durgam pathas tat kavayo vadanti. (14)

Arise, awake, having reached the great (teachers), learn (realise that Atman). Like the sharp edge of a razor is that path, difficult to cross and hard to tread—thus the wise say. (I.3.14)

अशब्दमस्पर्शमरूपमव्ययं तथाऽरसं नित्यमगन्धवच्च यत्।
अनाद्यनन्तं महतः परं ध्रुवं निचाय्य तन्मृत्युमुखात् प्रमुच्यते॥१५॥

aśabdam asparśam arūpam avyayam tathā arasaṁ nityam agandhavac ca yat

anādy anantam mahataḥ paraṁ dhruvaṁ nicāyya tam mṛtyu-mukhāt pramucyate. (15)

He, who has known that which is without sound, without touch, without form, without decay, without taste, eternal, without smell, without beginning, without end, beyond the *mahat* (great) and unchanging, is freed from the jaws of death. (I.3.15)

The Immortal Value of this Teaching

Narration...

नाचिकेतमुपाख्यानं मृत्युप्रोक्तँ सनातनम्।
उक्त्वा श्रुत्वा च मेधावी ब्रह्मलोके महीयते॥१६॥

nāciketam upākhyānam mṛtyu-proktaṁ sanātanam
uktvā śrutvā ca medhāvī brahma-loka mahīyate. (16)

A wise man who hears and repeats the ancient story of Nachiketas told by Yama, attains glory in the world of Brahman. (I.3.16)

य इमं परमं गुह्यं श्रावयेद् ब्रह्मसंसदि।
प्रयतः श्राद्धकाले वा तदानन्त्याय कल्पते।
तदानन्त्याय कल्पत इति॥१७॥

ya imam paramaṁ guhyaṁ śrāvayed brahma-saṁsadi
prayataḥ śrāddha-kāle vā tad ānantyāya kalpate,
tadānantyāya kalpate. (17)

Whoever with devotion recites before an assembly of *brahmins* or at the time of *sraaddha* of forefathers, this highest secret, obtains thereby immortality, obtains immortality. (I.3.17)

इतिकाठकोपनिषदिप्रथमाध्यायेतृतीयावल्ली॥

iti kāṭhakopaniṣadi prathamādhyāye tṛtīyā vallī ||

SECOND CHAPTER

FIRST VALLI

The Self is Not to be Sought Through the Senses

Yama...

पराञ्चि खानि व्यतृणत् स्वयम्भू-स्तस्मात्पराङ्पश्यति नान्तरात्मन्।
कश्चिद्धीरः प्रत्यगात्मानमैक्श-दावृत्तचक्शुरमृतत्वमिच्छन्॥१॥

parāñci khāni vyatṛṇat svayambhūs tasmāt parāṅ paśyati nāntarātman:
kaś cid dhīraḥ pratyag-ātmānam aikṣad āvṛtta-cakṣur amṛtat-vam icchan. (1)

The self-existent (Brahma) created the senses with outgoing tendencies; therefore man beholds the external universe and not the internal Self (Atman). But, some wise man with eyes averted from sensual objects (with his senses turned away), desirous of Immortality, sees the Atman within). (II.1.1)

पराचः कामाननुयन्ति बाला-स्ते मृत्योर्यन्ति विततस्य पाशम्।
अथ धीरा अमृतत्वं विदित्वा ध्रुवमध्रुवेष्विह न प्रार्थयन्ते॥२॥

parācaḥ kāmān anuyanti bālās te mṛtyor yanti vitatasya pāśam,
atha dhīrā amṛtatvaṁ viditvā dhruvam adhruveṣv iha na prārthayante. (2)

The ignorant run after external objects of desire and fall into the snares of widespread death, but wise men, knowing the nature of Immortality, do not covet the fleeting (unstable) things here. (II.1.2)

Yet the Agent in All the Senses in All Conditions

येन रूपं रसं गन्धं शब्दान् स्पर्शा□श्च मैथुनान्।
एतेनैव विजानाति किमत्र परिशिष्यते। एतद्वै तत्॥३॥

yena rūpaṁ gandhaṁ śabdān sparśāṁś ca maithunān,
etenaiva vijānāti, kim atra pariśiṣyate: etad vai tat. (3)

To the Self by which one knows form, taste, smell, sound, touch and the sexual pleasure, nothing remains unknown. This verily is That (Brahman which thou hast asked for). (II.1.3)

स्वप्नान्तं जागरितान्तं चोभौ येनानुपश्यति।
महान्तं विभुमात्मानं मत्वा धीरो न शोचति॥४॥

svapnāntaṁ jāgaritāntaṁ cobhau yenānupaśyati,
mahāntaṁ vibhumātmānam matvā dhīro na śocati. (4)

The wise, when he knows that by which he perceives all objects in dream or in waking is the great omnipresent Atman, grieves no more. (II.1.4)

The Universal Soul is Identical with the Individual Soul

Yama...

य इमं मध्वदं वेद आत्मानं जीवमन्तिकात्।
ईशानं भूतभव्यस्य न ततो विजुगुप्सते। एतद्वै तत्॥५॥

ya imam madhvadaṁ veda ātmānaṁ jīvam antikāt,
īśāṅam bhūta-bhavyasya, na tato vijugupsate: etad vai tat. (5)

He who knows this Atman, honey-eater, Soul, always near and the Lord of the past and the future henceforward fears no more. This is verily That. (II.1.5)

यः पूर्वं तपसो जातमद्भ्यः पूर्वमजायत।
गुहां प्रविश्य तिष्ठन्तं यो भूतेभिर्व्यपश्यत। एतद्वै तत्॥६॥

yaḥ pūrvaṁ tapaso jātam adbhyaḥ pūrvam ajāyata,
guhām praviśya tiṣṭhantam yo bhūtebhir vyapaśyata: etad vai tat. (6)

Who beholds him seated within the five elements, him who was born of *tapas* (of Brahman), who was created before the waters, who entered the cave of the heart and dwells there (he verily sees Brahman). This is verily That (Brahman which thou hast asked for). (II.1.6)

या प्राणेन संभवत्यदितिर्देवतामयी।
गुहां प्रविश्य तिष्ठन्तीं या भूतेभिर्व्यजायत। एतद्वै तत्॥७॥

yā prāṇena sambhavaty aditir devatāmayī,
guhām praviśya tiṣṭhantī, yā bhūtebhir vyajāyata: etad vai tat. (7)

Who is born along with *prana* in the form of all *devatas*, who, entering into the heart, abides therein, and who was born with the elements (he who knows Him, verily knows Brahman). This is indeed That. (II.1.7)

अरण्योर्निहितो जातवेदा गर्भ इव सुभृतो गर्भिणीभिः।
दिवे दिवे ईड्यो जागृवद्भिर्हविष्मद्भिर्मनुष्येभिरग्निः। एतद्वै तत्॥८॥

araṇyor nihito jāta-vedā garbha iva subhṛto garbhiṇībhiḥ:
dive diva īḍyo jāgṛvadbhir haviṣmadbhir manuṣyebhir agniḥ:
etad vai tat. (8)

The fire that is lodged within two pieces of wood, as the foetus is well-preserved by the pregnant woman, is

worshipped daily by men who are awake and those who offer oblations. This is indeed That. (II.1.8)

यतश्चोदेति सूर्योऽस्तं यत्र च गच्छति।
तं देवाः सर्वेऽर्पितास्तदु नात्येति कश्चन। एतद्वै तत्॥९॥

yataś codeti śuryo astam yatra ca gacchati,
taṁ devās sarve’rpitās tadu nātyeti kaś cana: etad vai tat. (9)

And that whence the sun rises, and whither it sets, on that there all the *devatas* depend and no one goes beyond. This is indeed That. (II.1.9)

Failure to Comprehend the Essential Unity of Being is the Cause of Rebirth

Yama...

यदेवेह तदमुत्र यदमुत्र तदन्विह।
मृत्योः स मृत्युमाप्नोति य इह नानेव पश्यति॥१०॥

yad eveha tad amutra yad amutra tad anviha,
mṛtyos sa mṛtyum āpnoti ya iha nāneva paśyati. (10)

What is even here (visible in the world), the same is there (invisible in Brahman), and what is there, the same here. He proceeds from death to death who beholds here difference (between Brahman and the world). (II.1.10)

मनसैवेदमाप्तव्यं नेह नानाऽस्ति किंचन।
मृत्योः स मृत्युं गच्छति य इह नानेव पश्यति॥११॥

manasaivedam āptavyaṁ neha nānāsti kiñ cana:
mṛtyos sa mṛtyuṁ gacchati ya iha nāneva paśyati. (11)

By mind alone could this (Brahman) be obtained; then there is no difference here at all. He goes from death to death who sees any difference here. (II.1.11)

The Eternal Lord Abiding In One's Self

Yama...

अङ्गुष्ठमात्रः पुरुषो मध्य आत्मनि तिष्ठति।
ईशानं भूतभव्यस्य न ततो विजुगुप्सते। एतद्वै तत्॥१२॥

aṅguṣṭha-mātraḥ puruṣo madhya ātmani tiṣṭhati:
īśāno bhūta-bhavyasya na tato vijigupsate: etad vai tat. (12)

The person (Purusha) of the size of a thumb resides in the middle of the body, as Lord of the past and the future, and henceforward (after knowing Him) fears no more. This is indeed That. (II.1.12)

अङ्गुष्ठमात्रः पुरुषो ज्योतिरिवाधूमकः।
ईशानो भूतभव्यस्य स एवाद्य स उ श्वः। एतद्वै तत्॥१३॥

aṅguṣṭha-mātraḥ puruṣo jyotir ivādhūmakaḥ,
īśāno bhūta-bhavyasya sa evādya sa u śvaḥ: etad vai tat. (13)

That person, of the size of a thumb, is like a flame without smoke, Lord of the past and the future. He alone is even today, and will be verily tomorrow. This is verily That. (II.1.13)

The Results of Seeing Diversity or Unity

Yama...

यथोदकं दुर्गे वृष्टं पर्वतेषु विधावति।
एवं धर्मान् पृथक् पश्यंस्तानेवानुविधावति॥१४॥

yathodakam durge vṛṣṭam parvateṣu vidhāvati,
evaṁ dharmān pṛthak paśyaṁs tān evānuvidhāvati. (14)

As water, when rained on a mountain-ridge, runs down the rocks scattered on all sides, so does he, who beholds the objects as different, run after them only on all sides. (II.1.14)

यथोदकं शुद्धे शुद्धमासिक्तं तादृगेव भवति।
एवं मुनेर्विजानत आत्मा भवति गौतम॥१५॥

yathodakaṁ śuddhe śuddham āsiktaṁ tādṛg eva bhavati,
evaṁ muner vijānata ātmā bhavati gautama. (15)

As pure water poured into pure water becomes the same only, so the Atman of the thinker who knows this, becomes, O Gautama. (II.1.15)

इतिकाठकोपनिषदिद्वितीयाध्यायेप्रथमावल्ली॥

iti kāṭhakopaniṣadi dvitīyādhyāye prathamā vallī ||

SECOND VALLI

The Real Soul of the Individual and Creation

Yama...

पुरमेकादशद्वारमजस्यावक्रचेतसः।
अनुष्ठाय न शोचति विमुक्तश्च विमुच्यते। एतद्वै तत्॥१॥

puram ekādāś-advāram ajasyāvakra-cetasaḥ,
anuṣṭhāya na śocati vimuktasca vimucyate: etad vai tat. (1)

The city of the unborn (Brahman) whose knowledge is permanent, has eleven gates. Adoring Him one does not grieve, and liberated (from all bonds of ignorance), he becomes free. This verily is That. (II.2.1)

हँसः शुचिषद्वसुरान्तरिक्शसद्-होता वेदिषदतिथिर्दुरोणसत्।
नृषद्वरसदृतसद्व्योमसद् अब्जा गोजा ऋतजा अद्रिजा ऋतं बृहत्॥२॥

haṁsaḥ śuciṣat, vasur antarikṣasat hotā vediṣat, atithir duroṇasat,
nṛṣat, varasat, ṛtasat, vyomasat, abjā, gojā, ṛtajā, adrijā, ṛtam bṛhat. (2)

As *hamsa* (sun) he dwells in heaven, as *vasu* (air) he dwells in the sky, as fire he dwells on the earth, as guest he dwells in a house, he dwells in men, in gods, in truth, in ether. He is born in the waters, he is born in the earth, he is born in the sacrifice, he is born on the mountains, he is true and great. (II.2.2)

ऊर्ध्वं प्राणमुन्नयत्यपानं प्रत्यगस्यति।
मध्ये वामनमासीनं विश्वे देवा उपासते॥३॥

ūrdhvam prāṇam unnayaty apānam pratyag asyati,
madhye vāmanam āsīnaṁ viśve devā upāsate. (3)

He (Brahman) sends up the *prana* and throws the *apana* downwards, that adorable one seated in the centre, all *devas* worship. (II.2.3)

अस्य विस्रंसमानस्य शरीरस्थस्य देहिनः।
देहाद्विमुच्यमानस्य किमत्र परिशिष्यते। एतद्वै तत्॥४॥

asya visraṁsamānasya śarīrasthasya dehinaḥ,
dehād vimucyamānasya kim atra pariśiṣyate: etad vai tat. (4)

When this Atman who dwells in the body departs from the body, what remains then? This verily is That. (II.2.4)

न प्राणेन नापानेन मर्त्यो जीवति कश्चन।
इतरेण तु जीवन्ति यस्मिन्नेतावुपाश्रितौ॥५॥

na prāṇena nāpānena martyo jīvati kaś cana,
itareṇa tu jīvanti, yasminn etāv upāśritau. (5)

Not by *prana*, not by *apana* does any mortal live, but it is by some other on which these two depend that men live. (II.2.5)

The Appropriate Embodiment of the Reincarnating Soul

Yama...

हन्त त इदं प्रवक्श्यामि गुह्यं ब्रह्म सनातनम्।
यथा च मरणं प्राप्य आत्मा भवति गौतम॥६॥

hanta ta idaṁ pravakṣyāmi guhyam brahma sanātanam:
yathā ca maraṇam prāpya ātmā bhavati gautama. (6)

Well then, O Gautama, I will explain the mysterious, ancient Brahman and also what happens to the Self after death. (II.2.6)

योनिमन्ये प्रपद्यन्ते शरीरत्वाय देहिनः।
स्थाणुमन्येऽनुसंयन्ति यथाकर्म यथाश्रुतम्॥७॥

yonim anye prapadyante śarīratvāya dehinaḥ,
sthāṇum anye'nusamyanti, yathā karma, yathā śrutam. (7)

Some *jivas* enter the womb in order to have a body, others go into the inorganic matter according to their *karma* and knowledge. (II.2.7)

One's Real Self, the Same as the World-Ground

य एष सुप्तेषु जागर्ति कामं कामं पुरुषो निर्मिमाणः।
तदेव शुक्रं तद्ब्रह्म तदेवामृतमुच्यते।
तस्मिँल्लोकाः श्रिताः सर्वे तदु नात्येति कश्चन। एतद्वै तत्॥८॥

ya eṣa supteṣu jāgarti kāmam kāmam puruṣo nirmimāṇaḥ
tad eva śukraṁ tadbrahma tad evāmṛtam ucyate,
tasmin lokāḥ śritāḥ sarve, tad u nātyeti kaś cana: etad vai tat. (8)

This Purusha who, building desire after desire, is awake when all sleep, is called certainly 'the pure,' is called Brahman, is called even immortal. Upon Him all the worlds are found: no one goes beyond that. This verily is that. (II.2.8)

The Self is Both Immanent and Transcendent

Yama...

अग्निर्यथैको भुवनं प्रविष्टो रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बभूव।
एकस्तथा सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बहिश्च॥९॥

agnir yathaiko bhuvanam praviṣṭo rūpaṁ rūpam prati-rūpo babhūva,
ekas tathā sarva-bhūtāntar-ātmā rūpaṁ rūpam prati-rūpo bahiś ca. (9)

As the one fire, after it has entered the world, though one, takes different forms according to whatever it burns, so does the internal Atman of all living beings, though one, takes a form according to whatever He enters and is outside all forms. (II.2.9)

वायुर्यथैको भुवनं प्रविष्टो रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बभूव।
एकस्तथा सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बहिश्च॥१०॥

vāyur yathaiko bhuvanam praviṣṭo rūpaṁ rūpam prati-rūpo babhūva,
ekas tathā sarva-bhūtāntar-ātmā rūpaṁ rūpam prati-rūpo bahiś ca. (10)

As the one air, after it has entered the world, though one, takes different forms according to whatever it enters, so the internal Atman of all living beings, though one, assumes forms, according to whatever He enters and is outside all forms. (II.2.10)

सूर्यो यथा सर्वलोकस्य चक्शुः न लिप्यते चाक्शुषैर्बाह्यदोषैः।
एकस्तथा सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा न लिप्यते लोकदुःखेन बाह्यः॥११॥

sūryo yathā sarva-lokasya cakṣur na lipyate cakṣuṣair bāhya-doṣaih,
ekas tathā sarva-bhūtāntar-ātmā na lipyate loka-duḥkena bāhyaḥ. (11)

As the sun, the eye of the whole world, is not contaminated by the defects of the eye or of external things, so the one internal Atman of all living beings, is not contaminated by the misery of the world, being external to it. (II.2.11)

Indescribable Bliss of Self-Realisation

एको वशी सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा एकं रूपं बहुधा यः करोति।
तमात्मस्थं येऽनुपश्यन्ति धीराः तेषां सुखं शाश्वतं नेतरेषाम्॥१२॥

eko vaśī sarva-bhūtāntar-ātmā ekam bījam bahudhā yaḥ karoti,
tam ātmastham ye'nupaśyanti dhīrās teṣaṁ sukhaṁ śasvataṁ netareṣaṁ. (12)

He is One, the ruler, the internal Atman of all living beings, who makes manifold His one form—those wise men who realise Him in their hearts, to them belongs eternal happiness and not for others. (II.2.12)

नित्योऽनित्यानां चेतनश्चेतनानाम् एको बहूनां यो विदधाति कामान्।
तमात्मस्थं येऽनुपश्यन्ति धीराः तेषां शान्तिः शाश्वती नेतरेषाम्॥१३॥

nityo’nityānāṁ cetanaś cetanānām eko bahūnām yo vidadhāti kāmān,
tam ātmastham yenupaśyanti dhīrāḥ; teṣāṁ śāntiḥ śasvatī, netareṣāṁ. (13)

The wise who behold the Self as the eternal among the transient, as conscious among the conscious, who, though one, grants the desires of many, as dwelling in their own selves, to them belongs eternal peace, not to others. (II.2.13)

Nachiketas...

तदेतदिति मन्यन्तेऽनिर्देश्यं परमं सुखम्।
कथं नु तद्विजानीयां किमु भाति विभाति वा॥१४॥

tad etad iti manyante’ nirdeśyam paramaṁ sukham,
kathaṁ nu tad vijānīyām kimu bhāti vibhāti vā. (14)

They (the sages) perceive that indescribable highest bliss as ‘This is That.’ How shall I know that? Does it shine (of itself) or does it shine by another light? (II.2.14)

The Self-Luminous Light of the World

Yama...

न तत्र सूर्यो भाति न चन्द्रतारकं नेमा विद्युतो भान्ति कुतोऽयमग्निः।
तमेव भान्तमनुभाति सर्वं तस्य भासा सर्वमिदं विभाति॥१५॥

na tatra sūryo bhāti na candra-tārakam, nemā vidyuto bhānti, kuto’yam agniḥ;
tameva bhāntam anubhāti sarvaṁ tasya bhāsā sarvam idaṁ vibhāti. (15)

The sun does not shine there, nor do the moon and the stars, nor do lightnings shine and much less this fire. When

He shines, everything shines after Him; by His light, all these shine. (II.2.15)

इतिकाठकोपनिषदिद्वितीयाध्यायेद्वितीयावल्ली॥

iti kāṭhakopaniṣadi dvitīyādhyāye dvitīyā vallī ||

THIRD VALLI

The World-tree Rooted in Brahman

Yama...

ऊर्ध्वमूलोऽवाक्शाख एषोऽश्वत्थः सनातनः।
तदेव शुक्रं तद्ब्रह्म तदेवामृतमुच्यते।
तस्मिँल्लोकाः श्रिताः सर्वे तदु नात्येति कश्चन। एतद्वै तत्॥१॥

ūrdhva-mūlo'vāk-śākha eṣo'śvatthas sanātanaḥ,
tad eva śukraṁ tad brahma, tad evāmṛtam ucyate,
tasmin lokāḥ śritāḥ sarve tad u nātyeti kaś cana: etad vai tat. (1)

There is that ancient *asvattha* tree whose root is upwards and branches are down. That indeed is pure. That is Brahman and that alone is called Immortal. Upon that all the worlds depend and no one goes beyond that. This is verily That. (II.3.1)

The Great Fear

Yama...

यदिदं किं च जगत् सर्वं प्राण एजति निःसृतम्।
महद्भयं वज्रमुद्यतं य एतद्विदुरमृतास्ते भवन्ति॥२॥

yad idaṁ kiñ ca jagat sarvam prāṇa ejati niḥsṛtam,
mahad bhayaṁ vajram udyatam, ya etad vidur amṛtās te bhavanti. (2)

This whole universe evolved from Brahman, moves in the *prana* (in the highest Brahman). That Brahman is a great terror, like an uplifted thunderbolt. Those who know this become immortal. (II.3.2)

भयादस्याग्निस्तपति भयात्तपति सूर्यः।
भयादिन्द्रश्च वायुश्च मृत्युर्धावति पञ्चमः॥३॥

bhayād asyāgnis tapati, bhayāt tapati sūryaḥ,
bhayād indraś ca vāyuś ca, mṛtyur dhāvati pañcamaḥ. (3)

From fear of Brahman fire burns, from fear the sun shines, from fear Indra and Vayu and Death, the fifth, run. (II.3.3)

Degrees of Perception of the Self

Yama...

इह चेदशकद्बोद्धुं प्राक्शरीरस्य विस्रसः।
ततः सर्गेषु लोकेषु शरीरत्वाय कल्पते॥४॥

iha ced aśakad boddhum prāk śarīrasya visrasaḥ,
tataḥ sargeṣu lokeṣu śarīratvāya kalpate. (4)

If here (in this life) one is able to comprehend Him (Brahman) before the death of the body, he will be liberated from the bondage of the world; if one is not able to comprehend Him, then he has to take a body again in the worlds of creation. (II.3.4)

यथाऽऽदर्शे तथाऽऽत्मनि यथा स्वप्ने तथा पितृलोके।
यथाऽप्सु परीव ददृशे तथा गन्धर्वलोके
छायातपयोरिव ब्रह्मलोके॥५॥

yathādarśe tathātmani, yathā svapne tathā pitṛ-loke,
yathāpsu parīva dadṛśe, tathā gandharva-loka chāyā-tapayor
iva brahma-loke. (5)

As in a mirror, so (Brahman can be clearly seen) here within one's self, as in dreams, so in the world of the forefathers; as in water, so in the world of *gandharvas*; as in light and shade, so in the world of Brahman. (II.3.5)

The Gradation Up To the Cosmic Being

इन्द्रियाणां पृथग्भावमुदयास्तमयौ च यत्।
पृथगुत्पद्यमानानां मत्वा धीरो न शोचति॥६॥

indriyāṇām pṛthag-bhāvam udayāstamayau ca yat,
pṛthag utpadyamānānam matvā dhīro na śocati. (6)

A wise man, having understood that the senses separately produced are distinct from the Atman and also their rising and setting, grieves no more. (II.3.6)

इन्द्रियेभ्यः परं मनो मनसः सत्त्वमुत्तमम्।
सत्त्वादधि महानात्मा महतोऽव्यक्तमुत्तमम्॥७॥

indriyebhyaḥ param mano manasaṣ sattvam uttamam,
sattvād adhi mahān ātmā, mahato'vyaktam uttamam. (7)

Beyond the senses is the mind, higher than the mind is the intellect, higher than the intellect is the great Atman, higher than the *mahat* is *avyaktam* (the unmanifested). (II.3.7)

अव्यक्तात्तु परः पुरुषो व्यापकोऽलिङ्ग एव च।
यं ज्ञात्वा मुच्यते जन्तुरमृतत्वं च गच्छति॥८॥

avyaktāt tu paraḥ puruso vyāpako'liṅga eva ca,
yaṁ jñātvā mucyate jantur amṛtatvaṁ ca gacchati. (8)

Beyond the *avyakta* is Purusha, all-pervading and devoid of *linga* (indicative sign). He who knows Him is liberated and obtains Immortality. (II.3.8)

न संदृशे तिष्ठति रूपमस्य न चक्शुषा पश्यति कश्चनैनम्।
हृदा मनीषा मनसाऽभिक्लृप्तो य एतद्विदुरमृतास्ते भवन्ति॥९॥

na saṁdṛśe tiṣṭhati rūpam asya, na cakṣuṣā paśyati kaścanainam,
hṛdā maṇīṣā manasābhikḷpto ya etad vidur amṛtās te bhavanti. (9)

His form is not to be seen. No one beholds Him with the eye. By controlling the mind by the intellect and by incessant meditation He is revealed. Those who know this (Brahman) become immortal. (II.3.9)

The Method of Yoga

यदा पञ्चावतिष्ठन्ते ज्ञानानि मनसा सह।
बुद्धिश्च न विचेष्टते तामाहुः परमां गतिम्॥१०॥

yadā pañcāvatiṣṭhante jñānāni manasā saha,
buddhiś ca na viceṣṭati, tām āhuḥ paramāṃ gatim. (10)

When the five organs of knowledge are at rest together with the mind, and when the intellect ceases functioning (becomes calm), that they call the highest state. (II.3.10)

तां योगमिति मन्यन्ते स्थिरामिन्द्रियधारणाम्।
अप्रमत्तस्तदा भवति योगो हि प्रभवाप्ययौ॥११॥

tām yogam iti manyante sthirām indriya-dhāraṇām
apramattas tadā bhavati, yogo hi prabhavāpyayau. (11)

The firm control of the senses, they regard as yoga. At that time one gets careful, for, yoga is acquired and lost. (II.3.11)

The Self is Existence

Yama...

नैव वाचा न मनसा प्राप्तुं शक्यो न चक्शुषा।
अस्तीति ब्रुवतोऽन्यत्र कथं तदुपलभ्यते॥१२॥

naiva vācā na manasā prāptuṁ śakyo na cakṣuṣā,
astīti bruvato'nyatra kathaṁ tad upalabhyate. (12)

The Self cannot be reached by speech, by mind or by the eye. How can it be realised otherwise than from those who say, 'He is?' (II.3.12)

अस्तीत्येवोपलब्धव्यस्तत्त्वभावेन चोभयोः।
अस्तीत्येवोपलब्धस्य तत्त्वभावः प्रसीदति॥१३॥

astīty evopalabdhavyas tattva-bhāvena cobhayoḥ,
astīty evopalabdhasya tattva-bhāvaḥ prasīdati. (13)

He should be known to exist and also as He really is. Of these two, to him who knows Him to exist, His true nature becomes manifest. (II.3.13)

Requires Sincere Renunciation of All Desires and Attachments

यदा सर्वे प्रमुच्यन्ते कामा येऽस्य हृदि श्रिताः।
अथ मर्त्योऽमृतो भवत्यत्र ब्रह्म समश्नुते॥१४॥

yadā sarve pramucyante kāmā ye'sya hṛdi śritāḥ,
atha martyo'mṛto bhavatyatra brahma samaśnute. (14)

When all desires that dwell in the heart of one cease, then the mortal becomes immortal and here attains Brahman. (II.3.14)

यथा सर्वे प्रभिद्यन्ते हृदयस्येह ग्रन्थयः।
अथ मर्त्योऽमृतो भवत्येतावद्ध्यनुशासनम्॥१५॥

yadā sarve prabhidyante hṛdayasyeha granthayaḥ,
atha martyo’mṛto bhavaty etāvad anuśāsanam. (15)

When all the knots of the heart are severed here on earth, then the mortal becomes immortal, so far is the instruction (of all *vedanta*). (II.3.15)

Seeking the Self

शतं चैका च हृदयस्य नाड्य-स्तासां मूर्धानमभिनिःसृतैका।
तयोर्ध्वमायन्नमृतत्वमेति विष्वङ्ङन्या उत्क्रमणे भवन्ति॥१६॥

śataṁ caikā ca hṛdayasya nāḍyas tāsām mūrdhānam abhiniḥsṛtaikā:
tayordhvam āyann amṛtatvam eti, viṣvaṅṅ anyā utkramaṇe bhavanti. (16)

There are hundred and one nerves of the heart. One of them (*sushumna*) penetrates the crown of the head, moving upwards by it one (at the time of death) attaining immortality, the other nerves are of various course. (II.3.16)

अङ्गुष्ठमात्रः पुरुषोऽन्तरात्मा सदा जनानां हृदये संनिविष्टः।
तं स्वाच्छरीरात्प्रवृहेन्मुञ्जादिवेषीकां धैर्येण।
तं विद्याच्छुक्रममृतं तं विद्याच्छुक्रममृतमिति॥१७॥

aṅgusṭhamātraḥ puruṣo'ntarātmā sadā janānām hṛdaye sanniviṣṭaḥ,
taṁ svāc charīrāt pravṛhen muñjād iveṣīkāṁ dhairyeṇa,
taṁ vidyāc chukram amṛtaṁ taṁ vidyāc chukram amṛtaṁ iti. (17)

The Purusha of the size of a thumb, the inner Self, is always seated in the heart of all living beings; one should draw him out from one's own body with steadiness, as one draws the pith (stalk) from a reed; one should know him as pure and immortal; one should know him as pure and immortal. (II.3.17)

This Teaching: A Way to Immortality

Closing verses...

मृत्युप्रोक्तां नचिकेतोऽथ लब्ध्वा विद्यामेतां योगविधिं च कृत्स्नम्।
ब्रह्मप्राप्तो विरजोऽभूद्विमृत्यु-रन्योऽप्येवं यो विदध्यात्ममेव॥१८॥

mṛtyu-protāṁ naciketo'tha labdhvā vidyām etām yoga-vidhiṁ ca kṛtsnam,
brahmaprāpto virajo'bhūd vimṛtyur anyopy evam yo vid adhyātmam eva. (18)

Nachiketas then having acquired this knowledge imparted by Yama, and also the whole teaching about yoga, attained Brahman, having become free from all impurities and death. Thus it will be with another also, who thus knows the nature of the Atman. (II.3.18)

Shanti Mantra—Peace Prayer

सह नाववतु। सह नौ भुनक्तु। सह वीर्यं करवावहै।
तेजस्विनावधीतमस्तु मा विद्विषावहै॥१९॥
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः॥

saha nāvavatu | saha nau bhunaktu | saha vīryaṁ karavāvahai |
tejasvināvadhītamastu mā vidviṣāvahai || 19 ||
aum śāntih. śāntih. śāntih.

This *shanti mantra* is an expiatory prayer. It is intended to remove all faults incurred by the disciple and preceptor in the course of receiving and imparting knowledge respectively and caused by abandoning of rules due to oversight or excitement. In order to ward off all evils the word *shantih*—Peace, is repeated three times. Om Peace! Peace! Peace! (II.3.19)

इति काठकोपनिषदि द्वितीयाध्याये तृतीया वल्ली॥

iti kāṭhakopaniṣadi dvitīyādhyāye tṛtīyā vallī ||

ॐ तत् सत्॥

om tat sat ||